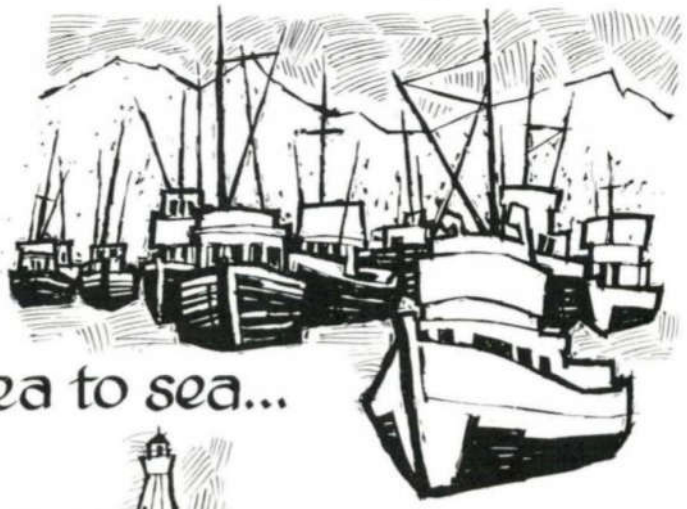
The Beaver

AUTUMN 1970

Indians Portaging Furs

by Cornelius Krieghoff



from sea to sea...

across the span

of three centuries

OURS IS A TRADITION OF SERVICE TO CANADIANS

Hudson's Bay Company

INCORPORATED 2ND MAY 1670

The Beaver

MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH

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'Indians at a Portage', oil painting by Cornelius Krieghoff in the H B C collection; 12½" by 17½", signed at bottom left in red, 'C. Krieghoff Quebec 58'

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Highlights in the History of the First Two Hundred Years of the Hudson's Bay Company

BY GLYNDWR WILLIAMS

Reader in History at Queen Mary College, University of London, and General Editor of the Hudson's Bay Record Society.

The Charter of 1670 begins with this initial surrounding the miniature of Charles II, by whom it was granted.

I THE GRANTING OF THE CHARTER

THE FIRST EUROPEAN discovery of Hudson Bay remains shrouded in obscurity. If the shadowy evidence of early maps is to be trusted Portuguese mariners may have sighted the entrance of Hudson Strait at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and there is slightly firmer ground for supposing that Sebastian Cabot led an expedition through the icy turbulence of Hudson Strait and into Hudson Bay itself in 1508 or 1509. Certainly Cabot was reported to have discovered the entrance of a strait 'betwixt 61. and 64. degrees in elevation, continuying the same breadth about 10. degrees west, where it openeth southerly more and more, untyll it come under the tropike of Cancer, and so turneth into Mar de Zur'. This description could well fit, except for its last phrases, a voyage through Hudson Strait, but if so the knowledge of Cabot's route was soon lost.

Cabot was searching for a short sea-route to Asia—the Northwest Passage of later generations. Spices, not furs, were his objective, and for long Hudson Strait was of interest to geographers and merchants merely as a gateway to the Pacific. After the vain search for a passage farther north in Elizabeth's reign, and abortive forays into Hudson Strait by Frobisher and Waymouth, Henry Hudson entered the Strait in 1610, and this time sailed on westward into the great bay that has since borne his name. Whatever the reality of earlier voyages into Hudson Bay, it was Hudson's expedition which established the fact and not merely the rumour of a great inland sea in the northern parts of the American continent. The map of 1612 by Hessel Gerritz shows that the reports of the survivors were accepted as proof that the route to the South Sea had been found, for away to the west stretches *Mare Magnum*. In efforts to find the elusive passage, Hudson Bay was explored in the next twenty years by Thomas Button (1612-13), William Baffin (1615), the Danish seaman Jens Munk or Munck (1619-20), Luke Foxe (1631) and Thomas James (1631-32). Their surveys steadily closed the western shores of the Bay, and as the realization grew that the open sea shown by Gerritz was in fact a landlocked bay enthusiasm dwindled and died. Baffin had noted the possibility of whaling in Davis Strait, but Hudson Bay appeared to offer no prospect of profitable trade. During the winter of 1610-11 Hudson had met a solitary Indian, and traded some deer skins and two beaver from him; succeeding expeditions failed to match even this modest trade. The wintering expeditions of Button, Munk and James saw no glimpse of Indians, who were inland for the winter, and so traded no furs. To the early explorers Hudson Bay appeared a desolate, uninhabited wilderness, a scene of frustration and calamity rather than of commercial potentialities. After the voyages of Foxe and James no ship from Europe passed through Hudson Strait for almost forty years, and the first gradual appreciation of the importance of the great bay of the north was to come from the French in Canada.

From the time of the explorations of Giovanni da Verrazano and Jacques Cartier in the first half of the sixteenth century, the French had shown themselves as zealous as the English in their quest for a route to the Pacific. Unlike the hazardous and profitless seaborne expeditions of the English to the north, the French probes along the St Lawrence were accompanied by the beginnings of settlement and trade. Although beaver were scarce along the banks of the St Lawrence they were abundant in the great forest belt north of the Laurentians.

By the early seventeenth century the French were tapping the continental fur trade as they received furs from Indian middlemen far to the west of their own area of settlement. Furs were shipped to France in growing numbers, not only for the domestic market, but also for re-export to the Baltic and Russia (for long, prime winter beaver were known as 'castor de moscovie'). The English discovered the wealth of this trade in 1628-29 when during a brief bout of hostilities an English expedition seized Tadoussac and Quebec, and sent to London the furs stored there. But for the most part English enterprise was confined to the Atlantic seaboard; in Canada the French rarely needed to fear European rivals, and as they traded with the Indians they heard persistent reports of the sea to the north, which they soon identified with the bay discovered and then abandoned by English explorers. Attempts by Champlain and his successors to reach the shores of this sea or bay were either repulsed by the difficulties of the terrain, or distracted by the more persistent urge to push westward. The French fur trade developed steadily in the area of the Great Lakes until it received a devastating blow by the Iroquois invasion of 1650 into the territory of the Hurons, the middlemen of the fur trade.

Prominent among the French *coureurs de bois* who rebuilt the shattered structure of the trade were Médard Chouart (the Sieur des Groseilliers) and Pierre Esprit Radisson, remarkable men who in their own way could lay as much claim to founding the Hudson's Bay Company as the eighteen Adventurers of 1670. Their travels are a subject of perennial dispute among historians, but the most generally accepted interpretation of their confused itineraries is that in 1654-56 Groseilliers journeyed west, probably as far as Lake Michigan, and in 1659-60 together with Radisson reached as far northwest as Lake Superior (though almost certainly not Hudson Bay, as Radisson later asserted). As they travelled and traded among the Indians of the Great Lakes, the two men gained a first-hand knowledge of the source from which many of the best furs brought down to the French settlements by the Hurons came. The Indian traders reported that they received their beaver from the 'Christinos' or Cree Indians, who lived near 'the Bay of the North Sea'. After the fashion of all good traders, Groseilliers and Radisson determined to cut out the middlemen, and attempt to trade direct with the Cree, 'the best huntsmen of all America', in Radisson's words. To lend point to their argument they returned from their westward wanderings with a splendid haul of furs, as Radisson reported in his account of the excited reaction of the fur-factors in Quebec:

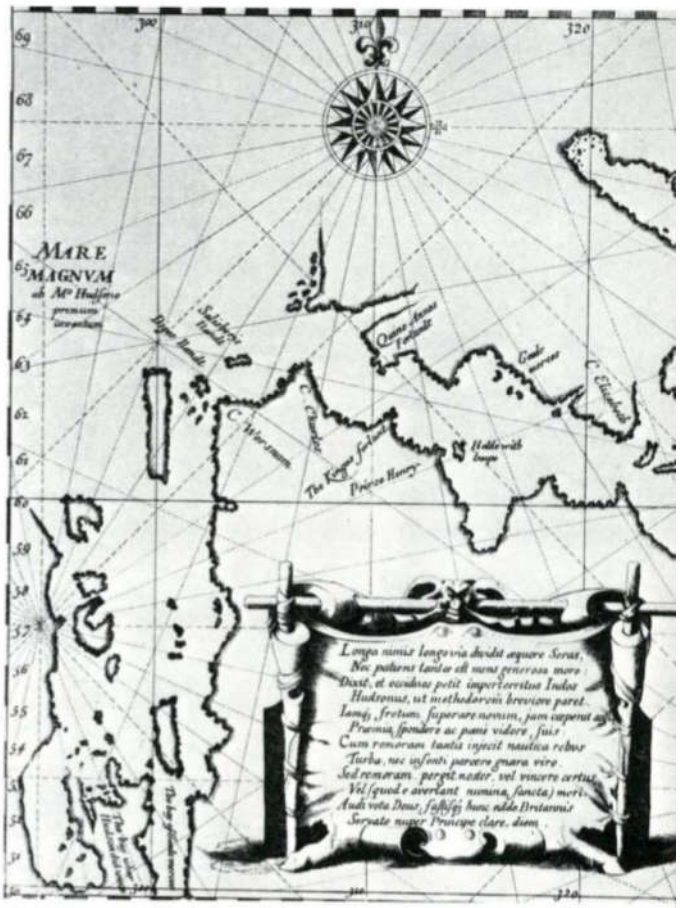
> 'In which country have you been? From whence do you come? For wee never saw the like. From whence did come such excellent castors? Since your arrival is come into our magazine very near 60,000 pounds tournois [gold coin] of that filthy merchandize which will be prized like gold in France.' Them were the very words they said to me.

Groseilliers and Radisson brought back more than a cargo of fine furs; they returned with a revolutionary concept of the pattern of the northern fur trade. They had proved, to their own satisfaction at least, that the centre of that trade lay beyond Lake Superior; and they were convinced that the most direct route for bringing furs from the land of the Cree was not the long and tortuous canoe journey to the St Lawrence, but the much shorter way down to the shores of Hudson Bay, and then out by ship. In their proposals lay the origin of the maritime bias of the fur trade and of the English Hudson's Bay Company. For these ideas Groseilliers and Radisson found little enthusiasm in New or Old France. The reaction of French officialdom at Quebec to their unauthorized expedition of 1659-60 was to inflict on them heavy fines (and possibly even imprisonment), while the failure of expeditions in 1661 and 1662 to reach Hudson Bay from the St Lawrence showed again the difficulties of the overland route. Smarting from their grievances, Groseilliers and Radisson turned to New England and then, after attempts to sail north into Hudson Strait from Boston failed, to England, which they reached in 1665. It was a decisive moment in the history of the fur trade.

Prince Rupert, nominated by the King to be first Governor of the Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay, from a portrait by Lely.

The English government and court of the period were not at first sight in receptive mood to listen to the schemes of the two French travellers. England was distracted by a humiliating Dutch war, and by the Plague which had desolated London and sent the Court packing to Oxford. But the first decade of restored Stuart rule was a period of imperial expansion and enthusiasm which saw the conquest of the New Netherlands from the Dutch, the founding of the Carolinas, the incorporation of the Royal African Company, and the purposeful erection of a structure of trade laws intended to transform the young empire into a close union of colonies, trade and seapower. In this atmosphere Groseilliers and Radisson found interest in their plans, not least because their narrative—which clearly lost nothing in the telling—revived old memories of the Northwest Passage. As the Secretary of the recently founded Royal Society noted after an interview with them, they claimed to have passed through rivers and lakes into the South Sea, and then returned by way of Hudson Bay, all apparently within a few weeks. The two Frenchmen were introduced to the King at Oxford by Sir George Carteret, privy councillor, treasurer of the navy, an investor in the African trade, a proprietor of Carolina and New Jersey, and reputedly the richest man in England. The King, in Radisson's words, 'did allow us forty shillings a week for our maintenance, and we had chambers in town by his order'.

Though expeditions planned for 1666 and 1667 came to nothing, the circle of courtiers, statesmen, and financiers interested in the two Frenchmen who had fallen under royal patronage gradually widened. It included Prince Rupert, the King's cousin, renowned for his dashing role in the Civil War, though now more interested in the world of science and art; the Duke of Albemarle, once the Cromwellian General Monk who had played a timely part in the Restoration; Anthony Ashley Cooper, later Earl of Shaftesbury, one of the greatest political and imperial personalities of the age; and wealthy, influential men with wide overseas interests in America and the West Indies such as Sir Peter Colleton



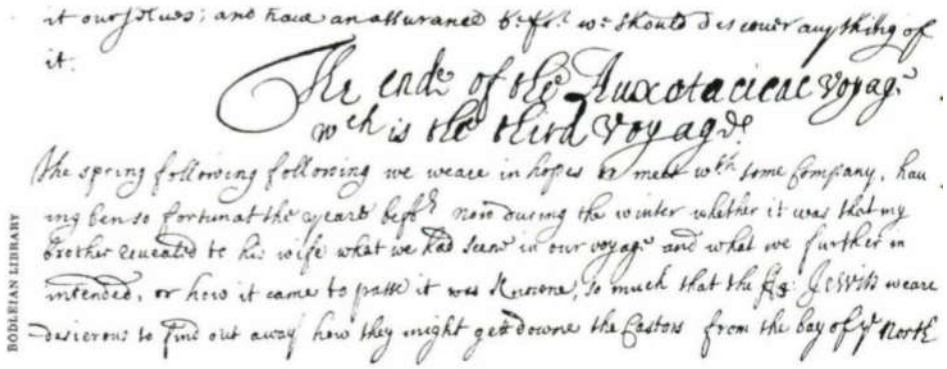
PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA

The Hudson Bay section of the 1612 map by Hessel Gerritz.

and the Earl of Craven. Behind these notables stood the sober figures of experienced and respected financiers: Sir Robert Vyner and John Portman, two leading London bankers; John Fenn, Paymaster of the Admiralty; and Francis Millington, a Customs Commissioner. A link with the past was provided by John Kirke, whose father had been a member of 'The Company of Merchants of London, Discoverers of the Northwest Passage', which

PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA

Pierre Esprit Radisson, redrawn from an 18th century Paris print and (below) part of the Radisson journal, translated before 1669, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, the beginning of the journey to Lake Superior.

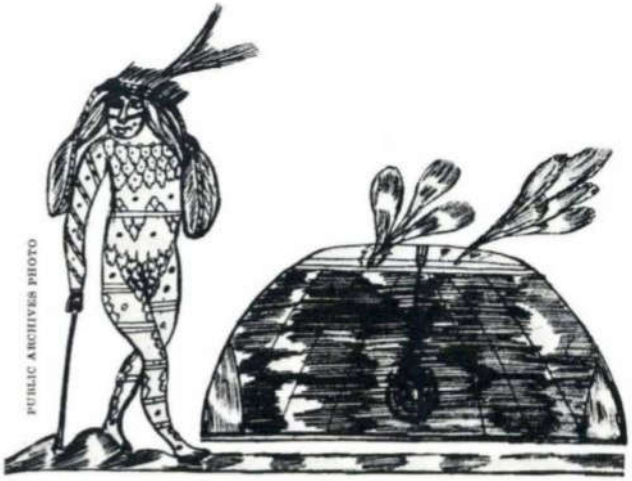


BODLEIAN LIBRARY

had sent Button into Hudson Bay in 1612, whose family had been largely responsible for the capture of Quebec in 1628, and whose daughter was to marry Radisson. Helping to knit the two groups together was Prince Rupert's private secretary, that cold, disliked man of business, James Hayes.

The sums these men were willing to risk in the speculative northern venture outlined by Groseilliers and Radisson were small both in comparison with their personal fortunes and with their investments in other enterprises; but they were enough to equip a preliminary expedition and to provide some guarantee of future development. By 1667 an informal consortium had emerged, which obtained a grant from the King for 'the sole trade of what Countryes they shall discover'; and in 1668 the long-planned expedition which was to test the theories of Groseilliers and Radisson at last got away. Radisson was on board the *Eaglet*, loaned by the King, and Groseilliers on the smaller *Nonsuch* ketch, only 43 tons burthen and 35 feet long. Discovery, settlement, minerals and furs were all mentioned in the captains' instructions, but the last clearly predominated. Whereas the captains were advised, in rather vague fashion, 'to have in yor thoughts the discovery of the Passage into the South sea and to attempt it as occasion shall offer', they were under firm, unambiguous orders to sail 'to such place as Mr. Gooseberry and Mr. Raddison shall direct . . . in ordr to trade with the Indyans there'.

The *Eaglet* was soon forced back, and Radisson probably spent the winter writing the manuscript of his 'Voyages', a translation of which was found among the papers of Samuel Pepys in the Bodleian Library at Oxford in 1885, and has fascinated and perplexed historians of the north ever since. The *Nonsuch*, captained by a Boston seaman, Zachariah Gillam, sailed on, navigated Hudson Strait, and wintered at Rupert River in James Bay. In a report to the Royal Society Gillam later gave some details of the voyage, and others are to be found in Thomas Gorst's journal of the second wintering of 1670-71. When the *Nonsuch* reached Rupert River in the fall of 1668 the crew built a house of upright logs, thatched with 'a ranke sort of grasse growing on ye marshes', and with a cellar twelve feet deep. Fish and partridges were plentiful, and the men remained in good health except for some signs of scurvy in their mouths. In the spring no fewer than three hundred Indians came down to trade furs, and also concluded a treaty with the new arrivals which gave them possession of the land—a transaction of dubious legal and practical value, but not without parallel elsewhere in seventeenth-century America. The brief, factual accounts do not dwell on Groseillier's role, but without doubt the Frenchman's long experience of the Canadian winter and his knowledge of Indian trading practices help to explain both the survival and the commercial success of the venture, which stands in sharp contrast to the appalling experiences of earlier winterers in Hudson Bay.



A skin-covered Cree lodge and a savage returning from the hunt with beaver skins, in sketches attributed to Louis Nicolas, Jesuit missionary in New France 1667-75.

The expedition had vindicated the promises of Groseilliers and Radisson, and the hopes of the investors in England. Furs were obtainable through trade along the shores of Hudson Bay, and this much was clear even from the brief report sent to the Secretary of State from Deal in Kent on 11 October 1669:

> Last Satterday night came in the *Nonsuch* Ketch from the Northwest passage. Since I have endeavoured to find the proceedes of their voyage, only understand they were environed with ice about 6 monethes, first haleing theire ketch on shore, and building them a house. They carryed provisions on shore and brewed Ale and beer and provided against the cold which was their work: They report the natives to been civill and say Beaver is very plenty.

It is impossible to draw up a precise profit-and-loss account for the *Nonsuch* voyage; nor would such a balance-sheet be of much significance. What was important was that the voyage had been made, the crew had survived a Bay winter, and a good cargo of furs had been obtained which sold readily on the London market.

While the venture's fate was still unknown, a group of the subscribers had obtained in June 1669 a trade monopoly for the investors generally. These now pledged themselves to a minimum investment of £300, usually paid in instalments—another sign of caution. The June grant was expressed in fuller and more precise form in October, soon after the *Nonsuch* returned. In many ways the October concession anticipated the full charter of the next year, with its granting of a monopoly of trade and mineral rights over the seas, straits and lands within the entrance of Hudson Strait, to be held (as the traditional legal formula put it) in free socage on the same terms as the Manor of East Greenwich. The detailed negotiations which led to the definitive Charter of 1670 were handled by James Hayes, and with the support of Prince Rupert, and the known participation in the venture of some of the most important men in Restoration England, the matter seems to have passed through the Privy Council without delay or difficulty. On 2 May 1670 (Old Style) the Charter received the Great Seal of England.

By the Charter eighteen subscribers were incorporated under the name of the 'Governor and Company of Adventurers of England tradeing into Hudsons Bay'. The first Governor was Prince Rupert, who was to be assisted by a committee of seven. Among the other clauses of the Charter several were noticeably more in keeping with colonizing ventures of the period than with narrow commercial enterprises. Thus, the Company was not only granted the 'sole Trade and Commerce' but was also made the 'true and absolute Lordes and Proprietors' of the vast region loosely defined as

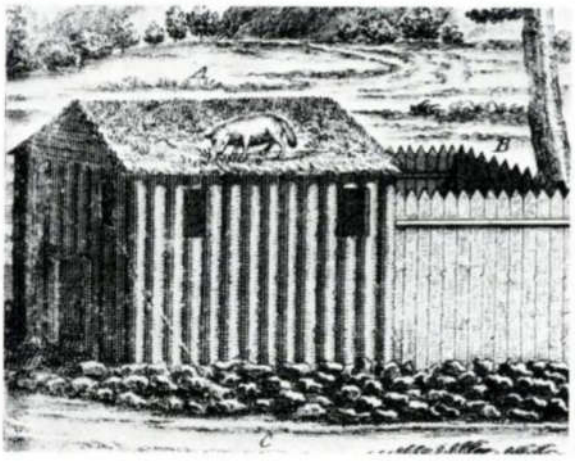
> all those Seas Streights Bayes Rivers Lakes Creekes and Sounds in whatsoever Latitude they shall bee that lay within the entrance of the Streights commonly called Hudsons Streights together with all the Lands Countryes and Territoryes upon the Coasts and Confynes of the Seas . . . aforesaid

As the extent of this grant slowly became known, and was found to stretch west and north without apparent limit, criticism mounted. This lay in the future, but it was not long before the Company servants were worrying about the vagueness of the grant. As Governor Nixon wrote home in 1682: 'Our patant is verry darke in that it is not bounded with any line of latitude or longitude'. Although the total absence of specific lines of demarcation was certainly unusual, incomplete boundaries were a familiar feature of many charters for areas where geographical knowledge was uncertain. Several of the charters issued to American colonizing ventures of the period contained no mention of a western boundary, and in law these grants presumably extended between the stated latitudes as far as the Pacific.

On another issue, analysis of the Charter does little to sustain the view that the Company's development as a tightly monopolistic joint-stock trading company sprang from a predetermined policy already decided by 1670. Then, settlement was still thought to be more than a remote possibility, and the new corporation was given wide discretion in its trading arrangements. Although the government and constitution of the Company were carefully defined, it was left free to adopt whatever trading methods it thought best. There was nothing to stop the Company becoming a 'regulated company', along the lines of the Levant Company for example, in which members could trade on their own account. Only as orthodox colonization along the Bay shores was proved impossible, and the peculiar circumstances of Indian trading were realized, was the Charter used in defence of a joint-stock arrangement. Even so, it offered no protection against the competition of French-Canadian or New England furs; and was found at times to be a rickety defence against English interlopers. The Company owed its long existence as a successful fur-trading company less to the shelter of the Charter than to its own sound commercial practices. Internationally, the Charter established an English sphere of influence north of the French-dominated area of trade, settlement and missions along the St Lawrence; and the next half-century would show that, lukewarm though the home government sometimes was in defence of the Company's position, the official recognition which the Royal Charter bestowed gave the Hudson's Bay Company a vital international and diplomatic status during the years of warfare which were to come. •

The 'Nonsuch' puts to sea, in this instance the replica vessel built for the Company's tercentenary.

Hut with vertical logs and thatched roof, probably much the same as the first Company House at Rupert River in 1668 where the crew of 'Nonsuch' wintered.



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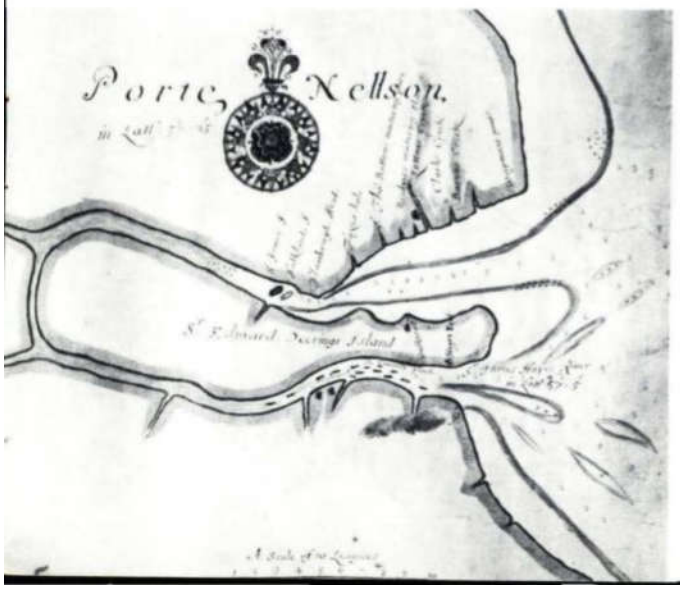
II CONFLICT IN THE BAY

DURING THE FIRST DECADE of its existence the Hudson's Bay Company, despite financial difficulties, the failure to pay dividends, and the loss of many of the original subscribers as hopes of settlement and discovery faded, proved the viability of the maritime approach to the fur trade of the Canadian north. Under its first overseas governor, the unlikely 'old Quaker with a long beard', Charles Bayly, new posts were established at the mouths of Moose River and Albany River, and later a warehouse was built at Charlton Island. Already the Company had settled into a routine by which it kept permanent garrisons at the Bayside posts, and supplied them by ships from England which usually made the round voyage in one season. Nor did the failure of attempts in the 1670s to set up a post at Port Nelson alter the Company's determination to expand to the north-west; for only by moving outside the James Bay trade catchment area could it tap the rich fur trade of the west whose potentialities Groseilliers and Radisson had glimpsed years before. In London the Bay furs fetched a good price, and in 1680 furs were sent for the first time to Europe, where they were sold in direct competition with beaver from New France. Although losses still outweighed profits, it was a sign of the impact which the Company was making on the northern fur trade that it now began to attract interlopers from England and the American colonies, and the more menacing attentions of the French to the south.

Almost from the beginning the French in Canada showed an understandable concern about the activities of the English company. An entry in the *Jesuit Relations* for September 1671 wrote of the new heretic traders on Hudson Bay who were luring the Indians down to trade. In 1671 a party led by the Jesuit Père Albanel travelled overland from Canada to Fort Charles on Rupert River, and on finding the post temporarily deserted took possession of the region for the French crown. The route involved no fewer than two hundred portages, but soon French traders were operating along the rivers running into James Bay, and the letters from the Bay factors contained what was to become familiar reading matter to the London Committee, that the French were intercepting the Indians on their way to trade at the Bayside posts. In 1674 Albanel again reached the Bay, and wintered at Charles Fort where his contacts with Groseilliers paved the way for the trader's decision to return to France in 1675. Another overland journey to Hudson Bay in 1679 by Louis Jolliet, already known for his explorations on the Mississippi, revealed the defensive weaknesses of the English posts. As he reported to Frontenac, 'They build to resist the cold and not the arms of those who might attack from the land'. Behind the reconnaissance probes lay the growing French realization that the Bay posts were not only attracting Indians who had previously traded with Canada, but that they were better placed to bring in the fine coat beaver of the north, so much in demand by the hatters of Europe. A decision to challenge the English position in Hudson Bay was made the easier because of the worsening relations between the English and French governments, whose alliance of 1670 had almost disappeared from sight by the end of the decade; and evidence of French intentions was shown when in 1682 Louis XIV granted a charter to the Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson.



The French in Canada had not waited for the issue of a formal grant, and the summer of 1682 saw an extraordinary sequence of events at Port Nelson, where three expeditions—a Boston interloping venture, a seaborne expedition from Quebec under the command of Groseilliers and Radisson, and a Company ship—arrived within a few days of each other. Swallowing their surprise and disappointment, all three parties wintered in their separate posts, until Radisson's enterprising Frenchmen showed the reality which lay behind the exchange of mutual courtesies by seizing the New Englanders' post in February 1683, and the Company post in June. During the long legal battle which followed this seizure the Company was to claim that this was 'the First Time that ever the French did Sail a Vessell in Hudson Bay since the beginning of the World'; but the damage had been done. The French had followed the English through Hudson Strait, and had set up a post on the Bay shores which controlled river routes striking deep into the interior. Because of the twists and turns of European diplomacy the French government favoured the quiet abandonment of Port Nelson, and probably connived at the return to the Company's service of Radisson, who in his own imperturbable way regained the Port Nelson vantage-point for the English in 1684. The scene of this first brush between the English and French in Hudson Bay was depicted in John Thornton's inset map of Port Nelson which formed part of his much larger parchment map of Hudson Bay drawn in 1685, and was used by the Company to support its claim of priority of discovery and settlement in this contested area. (See map at left.)

In Canada opposition to the English company was more consistent than in France, where a delicate diplomatic situation, and Colbert's concern lest the French dissipate their energy in side-ventures, tended to make for caution; and it was initiative from Quebec rather than Paris which led to the re-establishment of the French at Port Nelson in 1684. The French stayed only one winter, but on their homeward voyage the next summer seized a Company ship in the Bay. This exploit was quickly followed by one more daring in design and execution under the command of the Chevalier de Troyes in 1686. With a hundred men (two-thirds of them *voyageurs*, the rest professional soldiers), and a handful of officers who included the young Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, de Troyes made the overland journey from the St Lawrence to James Bay by sled and canoe in the early summer of 1686 to launch a series of devastating attacks against English posts and shipping. Formally, the two countries were at peace, and the unsuspecting English garrisons were twice caught asleep, and reduced to the undignified posture of fighting—if at all—in nightshirts. Moose Factory and Charles Fort were taken, and then de Troyes turned to his main target, Albany, the Company's most important post in James Bay, and the residence of its overseas governor, Henry Sergeant. Recent excavations on the south bank of the Albany River have shown that the old fort of squared timbers occupied a fine defensive position on a bluff rising above the waters of a creek, and that its layout suggests that the designer may have had some knowledge of military engineering. But with de Troyes turning against it cannon taken from one

James II. PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA

of the Company's own ships (it was of course out of the question to drag guns overland from the St Lawrence), resistance was short-lived. As a French account put it:

> . . . the cannon were so well served that, in little more than an hour, over a hundred and forty volleys were fired which reduced the fort to ruins. The Canadians, when all was going so well, began to shout 'Vive le roi!' At the same time, hollow voices came from the fort. The fact is that the besieged had all taken refuge in a cellar, and it was learned afterwards that, since nobody had been willing to risk lowering the flag, they had all made this noise together to signify that they were willing to surrender.

The whole episode draws a sharp contrast between the desperate circumstances of the French, half-frozen and famished, living on 'a kind of parsley', and the domesticated environment of the English. Among the fort's inmates were the Governor's wife and a chaplain; and the brief siege opened on an *opera bouffe* note as the first salvo struck the fort at supper-time, one shot passing beneath the arm of a servant pouring wine, the other in front of Mrs Sergeant, who fainted. Judging by the mutual recriminations of the Albany survivors who returned to England both discipline and leadership were lacking within the fort. Sergeant accused his men of 'Mutinous Caballs', and of complaining that 'should any of them loose a Legg or Arme or bee kil'd they much doubted whither the Company would take Care of them or their Children'. The Governor in turn was reproached by his men for being over-sociable with de Troyes after the surrender, and for a remarkably insouciant attitude during the siege: 'For Severall tymes Wee asked him if Wee should fire or Contrive some meanes to oppose the French; his Answere allwayes was doe what you please . . .'

17th century Canadien on snowshoes, going to war. TORONTO LIBRARY BOARD PHOTO

News of de Troyes' feat reached the French, though not the English, in Europe during negotiations between the governments of Louis XIV and James II to settle disputes between the two countries. While Duke of York, James had succeeded Prince Rupert as Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company until his accession to the throne in 1685, but he showed no particular zeal for the Company's interests once king. The agreement of December 1686 that all lands between Canada and Hudson Bay should for the time being remain in their present ownership was a bad bargain for the Company. The whole of James Bay was in French hands, and the Company was left with its post far to the northwest at Port Nelson, together with a new outpost at New Severn River. Its old trading structure at the Bottom of the Bay lay in ruins.

The events of 1686 set in motion a chain-reaction of attack and counter-attack in the Bay, but the first response of the Company to the news of de Troyes' seizure was surprisingly meek. In 1688 it sent out a strong expedition to build a new post at Albany, but with instructions to open fire against the French nearby only in self-defence. The Committee seems to have envisaged some kind of tolerant co-existence, a naive if worthy hope which took no account of the presence of Iberville, 'the first truly Canadian hero' in the words of a recent biographical sketch. Iberville was more than a flashy adventurer, the 'babillard' of Frontenac's biting phrase; he combined a ruthless aggressiveness in military operations with a strategist's eye for long-term trading potentialities. During the winter of 1688-89, though heavily outnumbered, by persuasion, subterfuge or force he overcame so many of the English at Albany that the whole Company venture collapsed, and the French seized the new English post and the Company vessels frozen in the ice. The letter from the London Committee to Port Nelson the next year with news of the calamity conveys the Company's sense of outrage at the ineptitude of its servants:

> That small numbers of French at the Bottom of the Bay had taken an English Fort and three shipps whereof one of good force with divers prisoners, this seemed hardly Credible at first, but proved too trew afterwards, For [Captain] Bond & his mate Foolishly wandring to hunt Pateridges, were them selves caught Like woodcocks, & then by subtle degrees our Factory shipps & goods surprized, to the perpetuall shame of the nation . . .

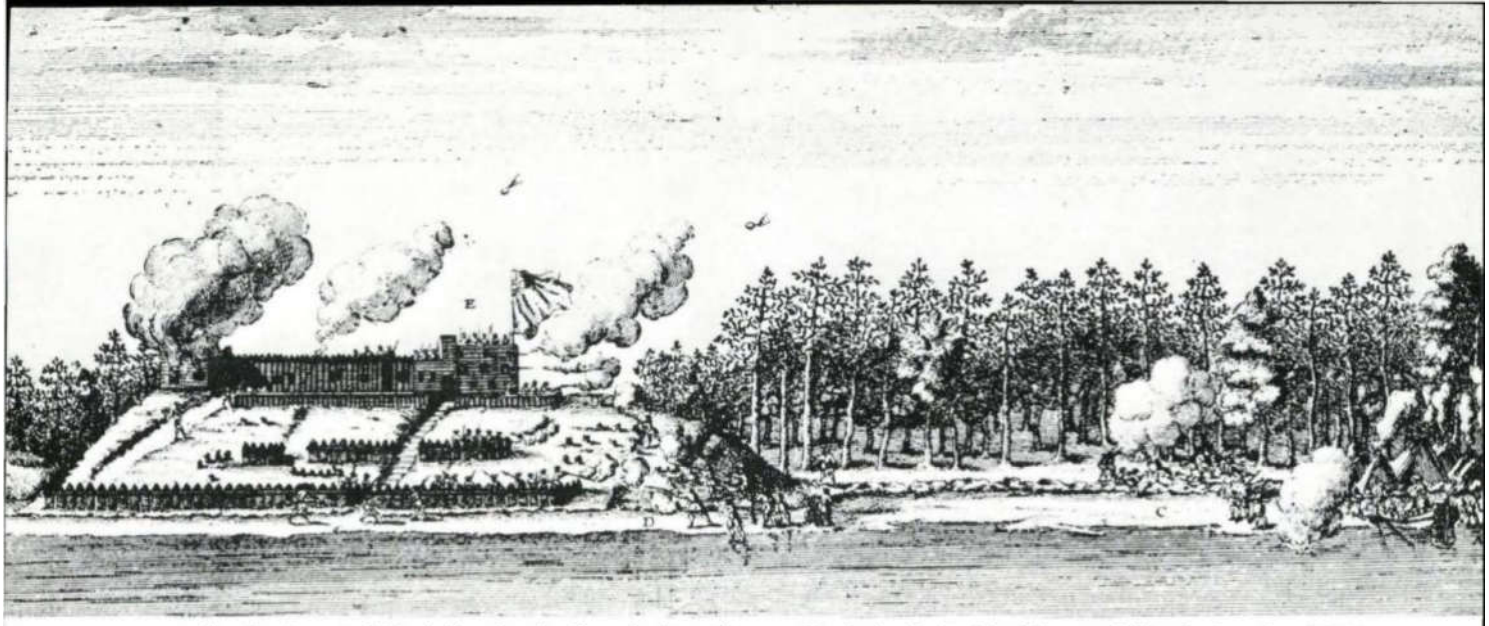
It was fortunate for the future of the Company that it cut a more competent figure in England than it did in these Bay skirmishes. It continued to market its furs in a businesslike manner, and was able to pay its first dividends in 1684, and 1688-90. In 1690 it also trebled the nominal value of its stock (in effect a free issue to shareholders), successfully beat off an attack on its Charter, and received Parliamentary confirmation of its privileges, though for seven years only. It anticipated firmer diplomatic support from the government of William III, at war with France since 1689, and was heartened by the

Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville. PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA

English naval victory at La Hogue in 1692. This was 'one of the bravest actions done by True English Sea men that perhaps was ever known in any age' it told its Bay servants—perhaps in the hope of inspiring emulation. Meanwhile it was preparing to take the offensive in the Bay, and in 1693 a powerful expedition commanded by James Knight retook Albany. There was no opportunity for heroics in this operation; for the garrison numbered only six, one of whom was insane and in irons. So weak were the French in James Bay that they abandoned Moose and Charles Forts without further delay.

The Bottom of the Bay was back in English hands, but Iberville was planning a great stroke farther north, the capture of Port Nelson. In 1685 Denonville, the Governor of New France, had pointed out that the English post there was a standing temptation to the western tribes, who 'will not have far to go, and will find goods at a much lower rate than with us'; and Iberville was attracted by the lure of the river routes pushing deep inland into the country of fine furs. In 1694, with the help of two naval frigates, he captured the English post, York Fort, which had been built on the north bank of the Hayes River, and turned the garrison loose to fend for themselves during the winter 'in the woods & deserts' before shipping them to France. In 1696 the Company, in turn assisted by two men-of-war, struck back and recaptured the fort. In 1697 Iberville once more took the fort in a campaign marked by melodramatic changes of fortune.

Iberville sailed for the Bay in the 46-gun ship *Pélican*, accompanied by four other naval vessels; but in the passage through Hudson Strait one ship went down, and the others separated in the fog. With no other ship in

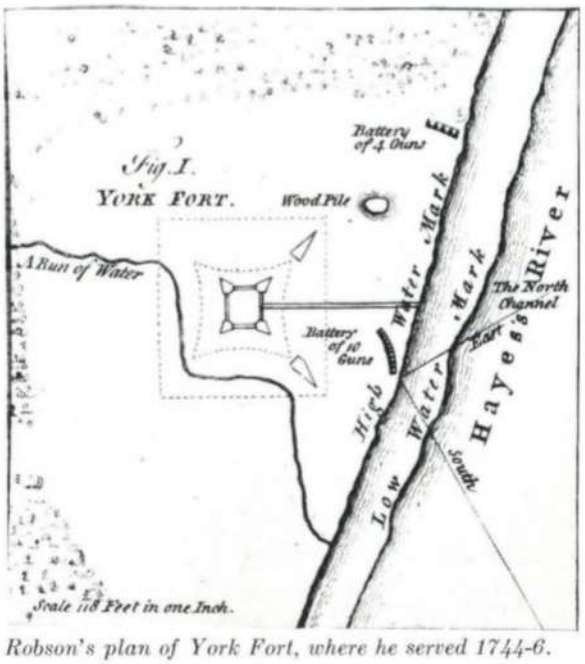


Bombardment of York Fort by the French, from Bacqueville de la Potherie's History of North America 1534 to 1701. Bombs from a hidden mortar, C, fly through the air while a skirmish takes place in front of the fort, D.

sight, Iberville made direct for York Fort, and was trapped there by an English force consisting of the *Hampshire*, a formidable 52-gun man-of-war, and two Company ships, the *Royal Hudson's Bay* (32 guns) and the *Dering* (30 guns). In the battle that followed the *Hampshire* went down with all hands. The French accounts of the action are definite enough. Iberville wrote laconically, 'I fired my broadside and sank her immediately, the vessel not passing onward three lengths'. Another Frenchman, Jérémie, has a few more details: the *Pélican*, he recalled, 'ran alongside the flagship of 50 guns, and fired a broadside so accurately and with such effect that, before they had time to tack, they saw half the sails of the Englishman in the water, and the ship sinking before the eyes of his countryman'. In terms of the naval firepower of the period this is inexplicable: wooden warships kept afloat through long hours of incessant battering from gunfire, and it was rare for a ship of the *Hampshire's* size to sink in battle unless its magazine blew up. The most likely explanation of the catastrophe which overtook the *Hampshire* is that at the moment of Iberville's broadside she ran onto a reef which either ripped her bottom out or capsized her. Some confirmation of this is to be found in another French account which noted that some of the stricken vessel remained visible above the water, and that she seemed to be resting on a shoal.

Whatever the cause of the disaster the effect on English morale was immediate and devastating. The *Royal Hudson's Bay* surrendered and the *Dering* fled. That same night the *Pélican* and the *Royal Hudson's Bay* were driven ashore, but the other three French vessels now put in a timely appearance, and Iberville settled down for the third siege York had experienced within four years. The result was predictable. As Iberville's mortars kept up a steady bombardment so the resistance of the garrison crumbled, and it surrendered before an assault was launched. Of ten attacks made on Bay posts since 1686 by French and English forces, only two had failed. The timber forts, imposing enough to the Indians, were feeble defences against naval cannon and mortars whose shot and bombs crashed through the walls or roofs, spraying deadly metal fragments and wooden splinters in all directions. Nicolas Jérémie has left us a revealing description of York at this time:

> The fort had four bastions, forming a square of thirty feet, in which was a large warehouse of two stories. The trading store was in one of these bastions, another served as a supply store, and the other two were used as guard houses to hold the garrison. The whole was built of wood. In line with the first palisade were two other bastions, in one of which the officers lodged, the other serving as a kitchen and forge for the



Robson's plan of York Fort, where he served 1744-6.

garrison. Between these two bastions was a kind of half moon space in which were eight cannon, throwing an eight pound ball, which commanded the river side. Below this half moon space was a platform, at the level of the water, which held six pieces of heavy cannon. No cannon was mounted on the side of the wood; all the cannon and swivel guns were on the bastions. There were altogether in the fort, which had only two palisades of upright logs, thirty two cannon and fourteen swivel guns. There were fifty three men in the fort.

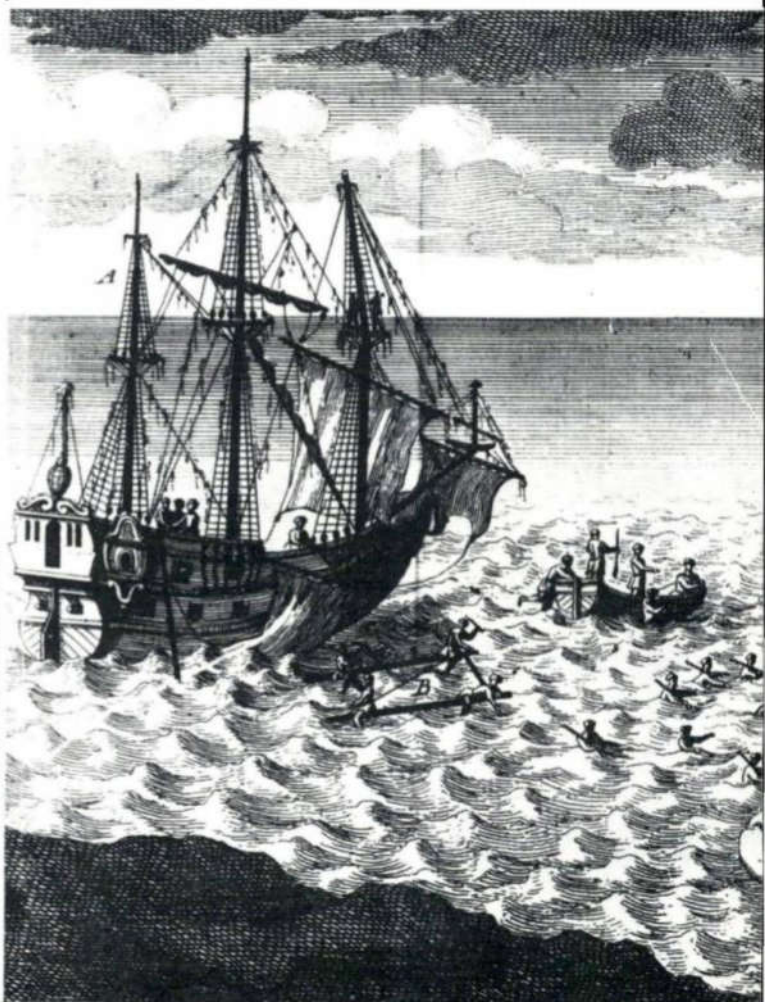
The undefended rear or inland flank is an obvious weakness, and it was one which remained long after this period. Writing in 1752 Robson noted of the York Fort of his day that 'the bringing only one six-pounder against it on the land-side, where the batteries on the river could be of no service, would be sufficient to make the men surrender or abandon it . . . when the first ball might blow up the magazine, and fort, and all that were near it'.

In these campaigns the Company servants do not emerge well as soldiers, nor was there any reason why they should. They were employed, and paid, as traders, or carpenters, or sloopers; but not as soldiers. Though most could use firearms they lacked even the elementary skills of the European infantryman of the period, and certainly were not braced to accept the hazards of war. Governor Sergeant's allegation that his besieged garrison at Albany in 1686 raised the question of pensions in case of injury or death has an authentic ring; this issue was a constant source of contention between the Company and its servants. The attitude of the garrisons in the Bay did not differ from that of the crews of merchantmen in this period who were usually prompt to surrender their vessel after the first shot across the bows from a French privateer. The Canadian *voyageur*, particularly when accompanied by regular French soldiers, made a more enterprising fighter just as in the next century he was for long to outwit the Company servants on the inland routes. Nor was the determination and flair for decisive leadership which Iberville possessed matched on the English side. No regular English soldiers ever appeared in Hudson Bay, and only in 1696 and 1697 did English naval vessels reinforce the Company's ships.

Iberville's recapture of York in September 1697 effectively nullified the terms of the Treaty of Ryswick between England and France, signed in the same month, as far as Hudson Bay was concerned. The Bay was indeed partitioned, as the Treaty stipulated, but in reverse fashion to that laid down by the diplomats. For the next few years of peace, and throughout the War of the Spanish Succession, the English retained the James Bay area, while the French operated from York (renamed Fort Bourbon). The strenuous hostilities of the 1690s were not resumed except for a French overland attack on Albany in 1709. Lacking artillery, the French were repulsed with heavy losses by an alerted garrison, despite the unmartial behaviour of some 'old servants who hid themselves in amongst old ropes till the enemy was beat and gone off'.

The Company survived the war years in better shape than its French counterparts. The furs brought in to its posts in James Bay proved ample for the limited wartime market, whereas the French never succeeded in disposing profitably of the splendid furs which came down the Hayes and Nelson rivers to Fort Bourbon. With the French hat-making industry in decline, and French export markets lost, the furs were unsaleable. They piled up in warehouses in putrefying heaps, till at the end of the war beaver had to be imported from England to help revive the hat-making industry. These troubles were reflected in the wavering French attitude to Hudson Bay during the prolonged peace negotiations of 1709-13. Port Nelson no longer seemed the coveted prize it had in Iberville's day. Its furs had embarrassed rather than strengthened the French trade in Canada, and when James Knight received the fort back for the Company in 1714 he found it in dilapidated condition: 'nothing but a confused heap of old rotten houses without form or strength . . . My own place I have to live in this winter is not half so good as our cowhouse was in the Bottom of the Bay'. The Company representatives were insistent that the English negotiators at Utrecht must demand the restoration of the whole Bay area; and the final treaty terms of 1713 achieved this. Disputes about damages inflicted during the wars were to drag on for many years, but the Company had re-established its right to the great Bay and its environs. As so often in the history of North America during the colonial period, events in Europe had proved decisive. ◆

Wreck of the 'Pélican' in 1697; B is a raft for the wounded. From La Potherie.



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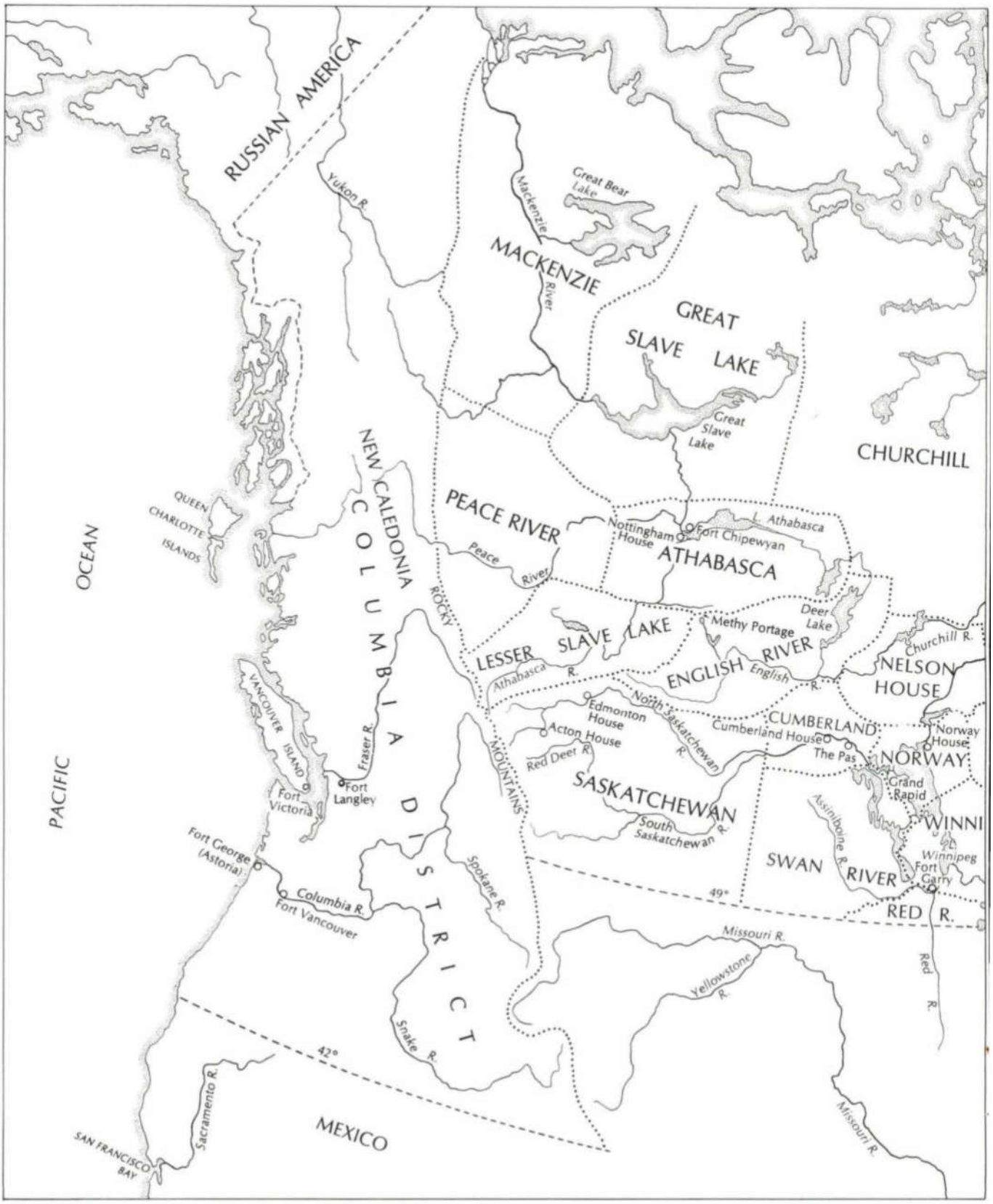
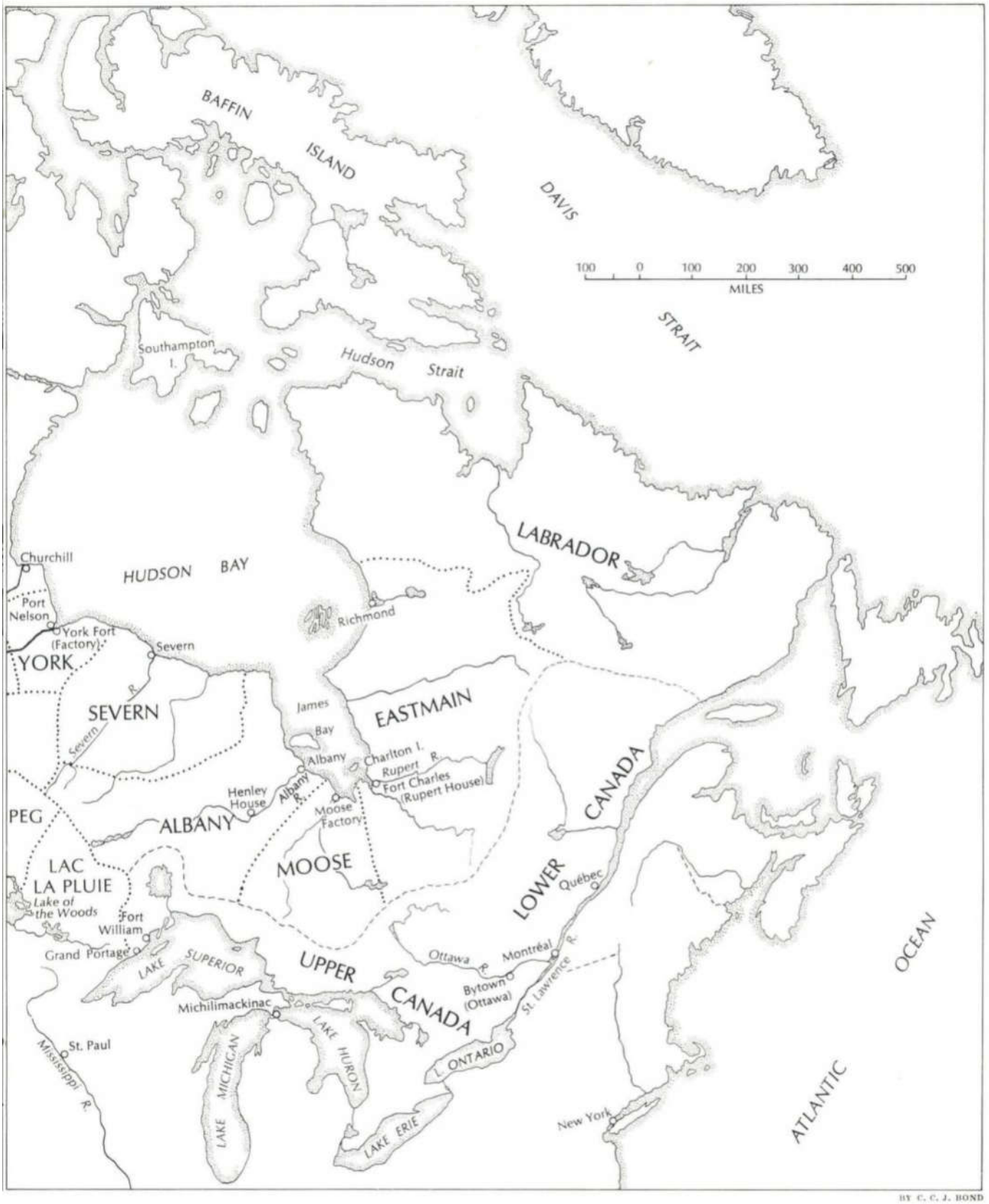
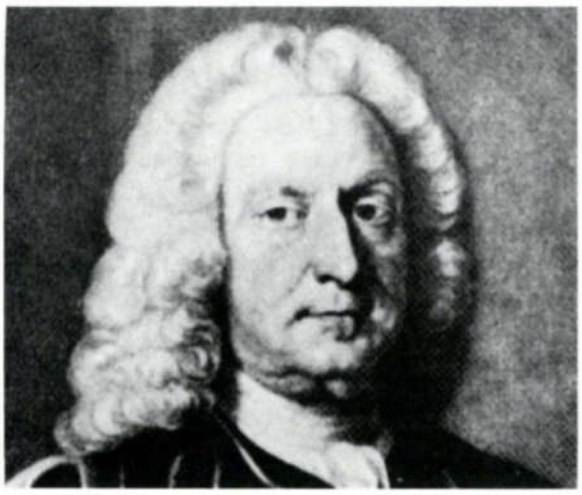


MAP FOR HIGHLIGHTS IN THE FIRST 200 YEARS OF H B C HISTORY



BY C. C. J. BOND

FUR TRADE DISTRICTS BASED ON MAPS OF THE 1830s



Arthur Dobbs. DUKE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

III THE DOBBS CRISIS

THE EXTENT to which the Company was involved in the great-power diplomacy of the Louis XIV wars tends to obscure the fact that its trade remained a small-scale affair. With the restoration of York Fort in 1714, and the establishment of a new post farther north at Churchill in 1717, the Company tapped the trade of areas west of the Bay as yet beyond the reach of its French rivals working out of Montreal; but the value of furs exported through Hudson Strait remained a fraction of that reaching Europe from Canada. Indeed, John Oldmixon in his two-volume work, *The British Empire in America*, first published in 1708, had dismissed the Company as being of little significance: 'The History of Hudson's Bay will not afford us much Matter. The Settlements are too inconsiderable to deserve much Pains to be taken about them'.

After the alarms and tensions of the French wars the Company settled down to a steady if unexciting routine in Hudson Bay, where its trade was firmly based on the main posts at Albany, Moose (re-established in 1730 after its abandonment during the wars), York and Churchill, with small outposts at Eastmain, Rupert River and Severn. There were no inland posts, and the Company relied on the quality, price, and certainty of its trade goods at the Bayside posts to bring down the Indians from the interior in the summer. The posts, garrisoned by no more than one hundred and fifty men in all, were supplied each year by the Company ships, three or four making the annual round trip with remarkable regularity.

In England the dominant figure in the Company's affairs was now Sir Bibye Lake, Governor of the Company from 1712 until 1743, a lawyer by training, and also Sub-Governor of the Royal African Company. Unlike previous governors, national figures of the stamp of Prince Rupert or Marlborough with too many commitments to take a close interest in the management of the Company, Lake devoted a conscientious and untiring attention to Company business. Under his guidance and that of the City men who by this time made up most of the London Committee, the Company prospered in a modest way. Details of the Bay trade were supervised by correspondence from London in painstaking though not always effective fashion; the commercial expertise of the Committee ensured a safe market for the furs brought home each autumn; annual dividends were paid from 1721 onwards; and surplus profits were carefully invested.

But if Lake's governorship, the longest in the history of the Company, introduced a period of quiet prosperity, it also hardened existing characteristics of Company policy in a way which spelt danger. All monopolistic companies were wedded by their very nature to a policy of commercial secretiveness; this was a legitimate weapon against the dual threat of foreign rivals and domestic interlopers. Under Lake, the Company pursued this policy with obsessive intent. Routine instructions from the London Committee laid down that 'none of our servants do send any intelligence to, or carry on any correspondence with any person whatsoever in London or elsewhere relating to the affairs of the Company'. Ships' journals, and letters brought home on the ships, were to be delivered to the Committee for scrutiny. Committee members themselves were warned against letting copies of the Charter out of their possession. No public record was available of the names of stockholders, or of the Committee; even Lake appeared in a standard guide to the City of London only in his capacity as a director of the Royal African Company. The last quotation of Company stock was in 1700, and transfers of shares in the eighteenth century were arranged privately. Under this blanket of secrecy the Company disappeared from public sight at an opportune moment, for attacks on chartered companies were mounting. The East India Company, the Royal African Company, the Levant Company and the South Sea Company faced a barrage of criticism. They were, one writer insisted, 'overgrown Plunderers . . . the Bane of all fair Commerce . . . the Ruin of private and industrious Traders'. Or, as another put it, 'Monopolies are absurd, inconsistent, and destructive . . . never yet was a Monopolized Trade extended to the degree of a Free one; therefore any Country abounding in Monopolies must decline in Trade'.

The ability of the Company to pursue its trade unnoticed and undisturbed came to an end when Arthur Dobbs, an Irish M.P. with a passionate interest in the expansion of British trade, turned his attention to its affairs. Dobbs's original interest in the Company stemmed from his conviction that somewhere in Hudson Bay lay the entrance of the long-sought Northwest Passage, a belief which the perfunctory denials of Lake and his fellow directors left unshaken. Frustrated by the Company, Dobbs turned to the government for help, and in 1741 a naval expedition commanded by Christopher

Middleton, a former Company captain, sailed for Hudson Bay. The search for the passage in this period has been dealt with elsewhere (most recently by John E. Caswell in *The Beaver*, Summer 1969, Outfit 300); what made the matter of intense concern to the Company was not so much the danger that exploration might become a cover for interloping as the unexpected way in which its affairs had become a matter of public interest. Lake's reluctance to promise help to Middleton's expedition if it got into difficulties had already provoked an ominous outburst from the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Charles Wager, who complained to other ministers that this attitude was 'very unbecoming a Company who subsist by His Majesty's favour, having only an old Charter which no doubt they have made several breaches in'.

The failure of Middleton's expedition to find a passage, and the subsequent recriminations between Dobbs and Middleton, brought cold comfort to the Company; for Dobbs now launched a campaign to overthrow the Company and open the trade of Hudson Bay. In an effort to discredit both the Company and Middleton, Dobbs produced a spate of pamphlets and books which included *An Account of the Countries adjoining to Hudson's Bay*, the first work ever devoted to the Company and the Bay area. With its statistics on the Company's trade (obtained from Middleton some years earlier) cleverly intertwined with sections of polemic argument, the *Account* signalled a serious attack on the Company and its privileges. Ignoring the complexities and overheads of the fur trade Dobbs juggled with the statistics he had received from Middleton to give the Company an enormous 2,000 per cent profit. The Charter was printed, and its vast geographical grant sternly contrasted with the Company's meagre footholds along the Bay shores. The expansion of French exploration and trade was described in anxious terms which indicated that a change in British attitudes was overdue. If the trade were thrown open to the enterprise of private merchants and colonizers, then, wrote Dobbs, settlement and trade would expand far beyond Hudson Bay to the Mississippi and beyond, 'by which Means, the Inland Trade of that vast Northern Continent, much greater than Europe, would in time be wholly enjoy'd by Britain, independent of any other European power'.

After some intensive lobbying by Dobbs, an Act of Parliament was passed in 1745 offering an award of £20,000 to the finders of a navigable passage. With this incentive before them, enough subscribers came forward to finance a private expedition which under the command of William Moor (another former Company captain) sailed for Hudson Bay in 1746 in quest of the elusive passage. Again, the Company was not so much concerned with the explorations which Moor might carry out—it was rightly sceptical about the existence of a passage in the Hudson Bay area—as with the wider implications of the venture; and developments after the expedition's return in 1747 confirmed its fears. Among the subscribers was a group of about thirty London merchants, seven of whom joined Dobbs to form the North West Committee. It was this small group which organized the voyage, and which after the return of Moor's ships petitioned the Crown for a trading charter. As a Company spokesman later remarked with some indignation:

> These late Private Adventurers finding their Attempts in Search of a North-west Passage had not answered their Expectations, and being tired with the Expence . . . they (instead of further pursuing new Discoveries) turned their Thoughts towards getting Settlements in old ones, as that was more sure, and a ready way to reimburse themselves.

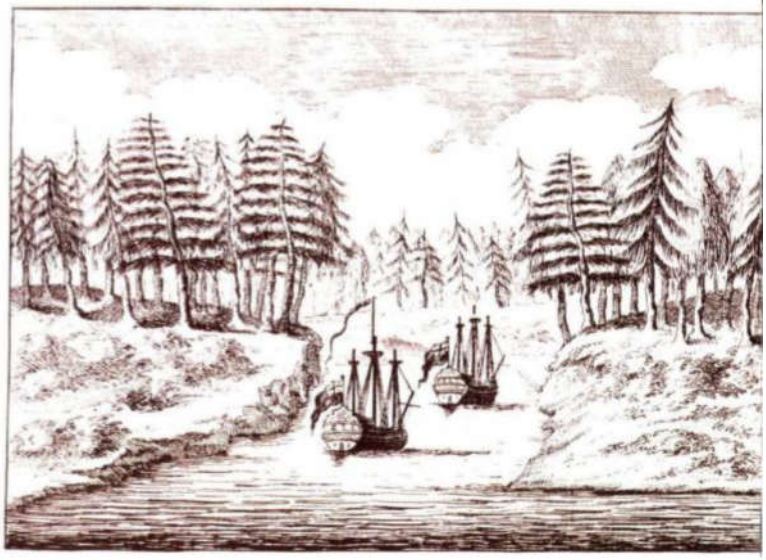
The North West Committee's petition went to the Law Officers of the Crown for report, and both sides delivered supporting statements. Dobbs and his associates produced a sixteen-point manifesto in which they declared that the Company's charter was invalid, both on legal grounds, and because of the Company's failure to exploit the territories granted to it. They went on to request a perpetual grant, with the right of exclusive trade, over all lands in Hudson Bay not actually occupied by the Company. This would be allowed to keep only its existing posts, 'with a reasonable district round each'. The answer presented by the Company, now under the governorship of Thomas Knapp, varied in approach from the heavily sardonic—

> How far a reasonable district round the Company's factories would be may be easily guessed at, especially considering their generosity (after they have taken away all their lands and trade) they are willing to allow them a house and garden—

to a forthright condemnation of the inconsistencies in the North West Committee's case:

> Complain of the Company's having a charter, yet apply for one to take away the Company's lands and property . . . complain of the Company's privileges, and require the same . . . complain the Company refuse strangers to take away their trade, yet demand an exclusive trade themselves.

Moor's ships wintering in Ten Shilling Creek, Hayes River, 1746, from the book by Dobbs's agent, Ellis.



A 1753 engraving of Fenchurch Street, where Hudson's Bay House was located.

Sir John Barnard, who defended the Company in the Commons against the attacks led by Dobbs.

In their report the Law Officers opposed any new grant which would result in two companies holding charters to trade in the same region; and disappointed at this judgement Dobbs and his merchant supporters decided to take the issue before Parliament. In March 1749 a Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to consider the trade of Hudson Bay, and the next two months saw the most serious domestic challenge the Company had faced since its incorporation. It was confronted with a well-organized campaign on a countrywide basis, in which twenty-eight petitions reached Parliament from the leading industrial towns and ports of Britain, all requesting an end to the Company's monopoly. The attack on the Hudson's Bay Company was part of a co-ordinated campaign against the monopolistic companies, in which the great ports of Liverpool and Bristol took the lead. For the most part the same towns and the same individual merchants were involved in the assaults of 1748-50 on the Hudson's Bay Company and the Royal African Company, and the weight of the attack was shown by the collapse of the African Company in 1750.

As the petitions reached Westminster the Parliamentary Committee was hearing evidence from twenty-two witnesses: Dobbs, six merchants, and fifteen former servants of the Company. The questions which the Committee put to its witnesses fell into a predictable pattern. The investigating M.P.s were interested in conditions in the Bay, and particularly whether the area was suitable for settlement; in the Company's apparent reluctance to move inland or to search for the Northwest Passage; and in its treatment of Indians. In effect, the Committee was operating along lines of enquiry suggested by Dobbs in his many criticisms of the Company, and combined with the hostile nature of many of the witnesses this questioning soon produced an unfavourable picture of the Company. Where only a few years before the Company had attracted little publicity, it was now a centre of critical attention. Writers mulled over the bitter controversy between Dobbs and Middleton and the attitude of the Company towards the discovery expeditions of the period; maps were printed showing the latest explorations in Hudson Bay (Dobbs's map appears in *The Beaver*, 1958, Autumn, p. 28); full-length accounts of the Moor expedition by Ellis and Drage were published; and the Parliamentary hearings were accompanied by a minor flood of pamphlet literature and by widespread comment in the press. On this literary battlefield the Company

found few defenders. Dobbs and his supporters monopolized the printed word, and even writers who were not instinctively hostile to chartered companies in general could find little good to say of the Hudson's Bay Company. As the influential writer, John Campbell, concluded: 'They employ but a few ships, and a small Number of Seamen; their Factories are few and thin, all which may answer their Purposes very well; but 'tis plain they do not answer the national Purpose of enlarging our Navigation, and increasing our Seamen'.

The Company's sole retort to this massed onslaught took the form of a short pamphlet, *The Case of the Hudson's Bay Company*, written by its solicitor Joshua Sharpe and circulated among M.P.s. The pamphlet confirms the impression that the debate on the Company's trade was being conducted at two different levels. Dobbs and his associates enthused over vast, expansive schemes; they predicted a limitless extension of settlement, and a tenfold increase in the fur trade 'in a very short Time'. The Company approach was altogether more prosaic, and was based on long experience of Bay conditions. Sharpe's pamphlet reminded its readers of the difficulties of colonization in so harsh a climate, and explained the reasons for the permanent posts along the Bay shores in preference to the French method of sending traders far inland among the Indians. The contrast between the highflown, imaginative ideas of Dobbs and the cautious, businesslike attitude of the Company is well illustrated by the derisory marginal comments scribbled by a member of the London Committee on the pages of Dobbs's pamphlet, *A Short State of the Countries and Trade of North America. Claimed by the Hudson's Bay Company*. Dobbs's plan for bringing home timber from Hudson Bay, 'of which there is a vast Quantity' and expanding westward to the 'rich, civilized Nations' of the Pacific coast called forth the response, 'When the Sky falls a great Number of Larks may be catched'; his insistence that the Pacific lay only a short distance away was greeted with scepticism, 'only by Information or hearsay by 3^{d} or 4th or 5th hand & those Informations Seldom or never true'; finally the excited discussion of a land-route between Hudson Bay and the Pacific so short that sled-transport would make it a commercial possibility was accompanied by the brusque comment, 'May as well build Castles In the Air'.

The Parliamentary Committee concluded its investigations in April, and by the end of the month had delivered its printed report to the Commons. The report included transcripts of evidence given before the Committee, and, more revealing, a number of documents extracted from the Company which dealt with questions of trade and finance hitherto regarded by the Company as strictly confidential. For the first time the structure of the Company and its trade were laid bare. The names of the shareholders, the value of imports and exports, the standard of trade with the Indians, the position of the Bay posts, instructions to factors in the Bay, were all

Portrait in the H B C collection thought to be of Thomas Knapp, Company Governor 1746-50.

printed. The Company could derive some comfort from the reflection that these figures showed that Dobbs's allegation of huge profits was wildly inflated. His conjecture of a 2,000 per cent profit dwindled on analysis to a more modest 30 per cent; and it was revealed that only once in the previous thirty years had a dividend of more than 10 per cent been paid to shareholders. In the debate in the Commons on the report of the Committee the Company found an imposing defender in Sir John Barnard, a leading authority on trade and finance. He attributed the basest motives to the antagonists of the Company, and criticized their methods of organizing the petitions which had descended upon the House during the preceding weeks.

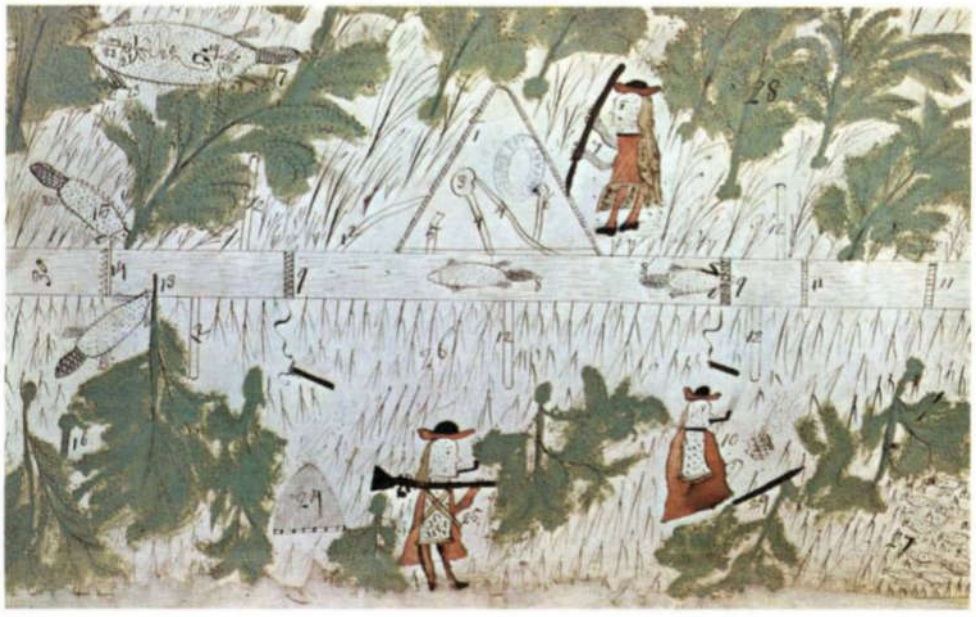
To come to some final resolve on the matter the Commons sat as a Committee of the Whole House in early May, and called further witnesses before it. This time the Company was represented by those of its factors and ship captains who were in England, the only occasion on which men with actual experience of the Bay were heard in defence of the Company. More than one servant in the Bay had sought to refute in his journal the charges made by Dobbs and other critics. William Coats, a long-serving captain, dismissed Dobbs's *Account of Hudson's Bay* as - -

. . . so erronius, so superficial, and so trifling, in almost every circumstance. So contrary to the experience and concurrent testimony of every person who have resided in that country, or of those who have used it any considerable time, that when it first appeared it was a matter of astonishment to all those who may be supposed to be competent judges . . . all the monstrous fables of antiquity can hardly parrelel his absurdities.

James Isham, the Company factor who had coped, first at Churchill and then at York, with the problems presented by the wintering in the Bay of the Middleton and Moor expeditions, sent the Company a rigorous criticism of Ellis's account of Moor's voyage, correcting statement after statement to support his observation that the book was one 'which is neither consistant with truth, Justice, nor honour'. But the literary efforts of the Company servants either remained in their private possession or got no further than the Company's offices in Fenchurch Street.

In Parliament the issues under consideration had now narrowed to the fundamental question of how effectively the Company was upholding British interests in North America in the face of relentless French rivalry and in the light of its own reluctance to expand inland. Here the veteran Bay servants spoke gloomily of the expense, transportation difficulties and damage to established trade at the Bayside posts which would result from any large-scale movement into the interior. Their evidence before the House, though one-sided, was probably decisive, and a motion to expose to legal trial the Company's right to an exclusive trade was defeated by a majority of more than two to one.

Although threats of renewed attack on the Charter, and rumours of interloping expeditions, continued to alarm the Company for some time, it had won the day; and this at a time when other trading companies had proved unable to resist the attacks of their critics. In 1750 the Royal African Company was dissolved, and in 1753 the Levant Company's charter was modified. But the Hudson's Bay Company had a deceptive strength which these companies lacked. There was no Trojan horse of dissidents within the ranks of the Company's shareholders. On each of the five occasions during the crisis years when extraordinary meetings of the General Court were called to consider the implications of Dobbs's activities, shareholders had been content to leave matters with the Governor and Committee. As one Committee member replied to Dobbs's accusation that he and his fellows were nothing short of dictators, 'Mr. Dobbs cannot produce any single Adventurer that makes any complaint'. Then again, though the Company's trade was a limited one, it was also steadily profitable. The Company made no financial calls on the government as did the Royal African Company; it showed no signs of commercial disintegration as did the Levant Company. To ministers of the period the Company may have appeared unambitious, even unenterprising, in the context of world-wide rivalry with the French; but they had no reason to suppose that the establishment of a rival company or the opening of the trade to individual merchants would have produced a firmer bulwark against the French in Canada. A Company which demanded neither military support nor financial subsidy had its own kind of value to a government perpetually harassed by such demands from other quarters. A newspaper comment on the crucial vote of 8 May in the Commons probably reflected the feelings of most ministers and M.P.s: 'As it appeared to be impossible to preserve this trade without forts and settlements on the coast of Hudson's Bay, and as such forts and settlements must be supported either by exclusive companies, or at the publick expence, the affair was dropt'. ◆



Besides his critique of Ellis's book, James Isham sent to the Committee among his 'Observations' notes and sketch of beaver hunting. An Indian breaks open a beaver house; nets are set in a creek watched by an Indian with stick to kill the animals; beavers cutting and hauling trees; at bottom right, a flock of partridges.

Henry Kelsey in 1690 saw on the plains 'a Buffilo great' and the following year his Indian companions laid in supplies from the 'great parcel of Buffilo'. From a painting by C. W. Jefferys for the Hudson's Bay Company.

IV KELSEY, HENDAY, AND THE PRAIRIES

ONE OF THE GRAVEST CHARGES brought against the Hudson's Bay Company by Dobbs and his associates was that it had failed to explore the interior. The case of the critics was summarized by Joseph Robson in an acid sentence in his *Account of Six Years Residence in Hudson's Bay*, published in 1752: 'The Company have for eighty years slept at the edge of a frozen sea; they have shewn no curiosity to penetrate farther themselves, and have exerted all their art and power to crush that spirit in others'. It was in an effort to refute this sort of damaging accusation that the Company had submitted to the Parliamentary Committee of 1749 a selection of correspondence with its Bay factors on discovery projects. This was printed as section XXVII of the Appendix to the Committee's report, and was followed in section XXVIII by two copies of a journal by Henry Kelsey purporting to describe an inland journey from York in the early 1690s. Around this journal several tantalizing historical problems have developed.

Kelsey's activities dominated the correspondence between the London Committee and Governor Geyer at York which was printed in section XXVII. 'He is a very active Lad, delighting much in Indians Company, being never better pleased than when he is travelling amongst them' the Committee noted; and letters from Geyer described the progress of Kelsey's inland venture. In September 1690 Geyer reported, 'This Summer I sent up Henry Kelsey (who chearfully undertook the Journey) up into the Country of the *Assinae Poets*, with the Captain of that Nation, to call, encourage, and invite, the remoter Indians to a Trade with us . . .'; in September 1691 that he had received a letter from Kelsey telling him of his arrival among the 'Assinae Poet' Indians; and finally in September 1692 that Kelsey had returned to York 'with a good Fleet of Indians'. The journals produced by the Company to sustain this story pose immediate difficulties. They are extracts covering only the months July to September, of 1691, according to the first copy, of 1692 according to the second. They describe Kelsey's movements among the Stone Indians and the 'Naywatamee Poets' and his efforts to make peace among them; but it is impossible to determine where Kelsey travelled because this part of his inland journey started from 'Deering's Point' (Sir Edward Dering was Deputy Governor of the Company at this time), the location of which was nowhere given.

Kelsey and his travels did not in fact figure prominently in the enquiry of 1749, but in his book of 1752 Robson insisted that the journal was a spurious one. His account of Kelsey, which he claimed to have heard from servants in the Bay, was quite different from the version in the Company documents:

Henry Kelsey, a little boy, used to take great delight in the Company of the natives, and in learning their language, for which, and some unlucky tricks that boys of spirit are always guilty of, the governor would often correct him with great severity. He resented this deeply; and when he was advanced a little in years and strength, he took an opportunity of going off with some distant Indians, to whom he had endeared himself by a long acquaintance and many little offices of kindness. A Year or two after, the governor received by an Indian a piece of birch-rind folded up, and written upon with charcoal. This was a letter from Kelsey; in which he intreated the governor to pardon him for running away, and to suffer him to return with favour and encouragement. Accordingly, he came down with a party of Indians, dressed after their manner, and attended by a wife, who wanted to follow him into the factory. The governor opposed this; but upon Kelsey's telling him in English, that he would not go in himself if his wife was not suffered to go in, he knew him, and let them both enter.

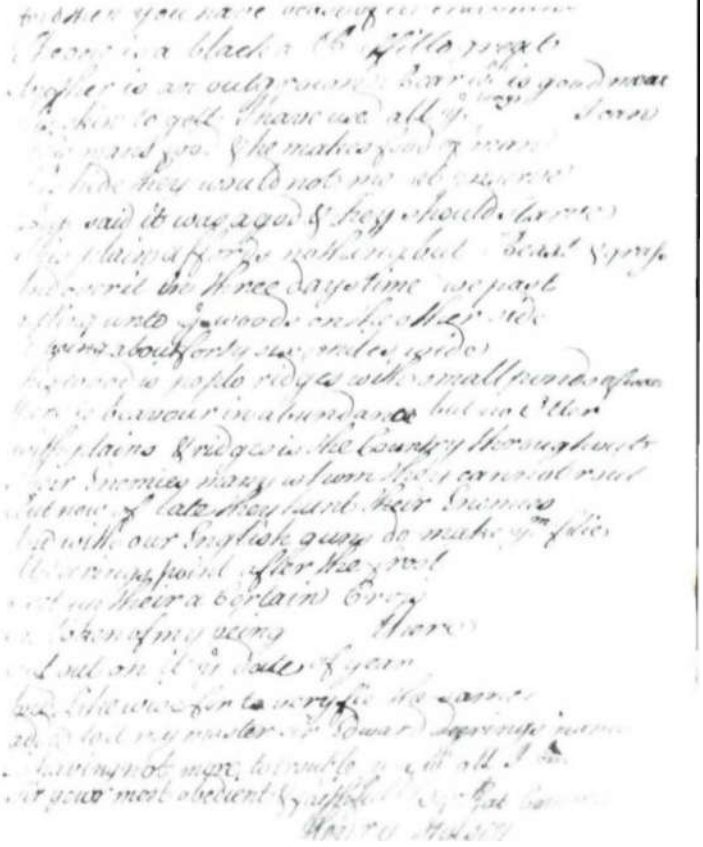
The material which appeared in the printed *Report*, maintained Robson, showed either that Geyer had 'grossly imposed upon the Company, or the Company upon the public'. He added that as far as the journal was concerned 'I no more believe that it is Kelsey's than it is mine'. Later in Robson's book the journey underwent further scrutiny, this time by Dobbs (writing anonymously) who concluded that if Kelsey had indeed kept full journals, then 'the Company have thought proper to suppress them, lest the making public such authentic testimonials of a temperate climate, fertile soil, and a trade capable of vast extension, should bring too severe a reprimand upon the present management'.

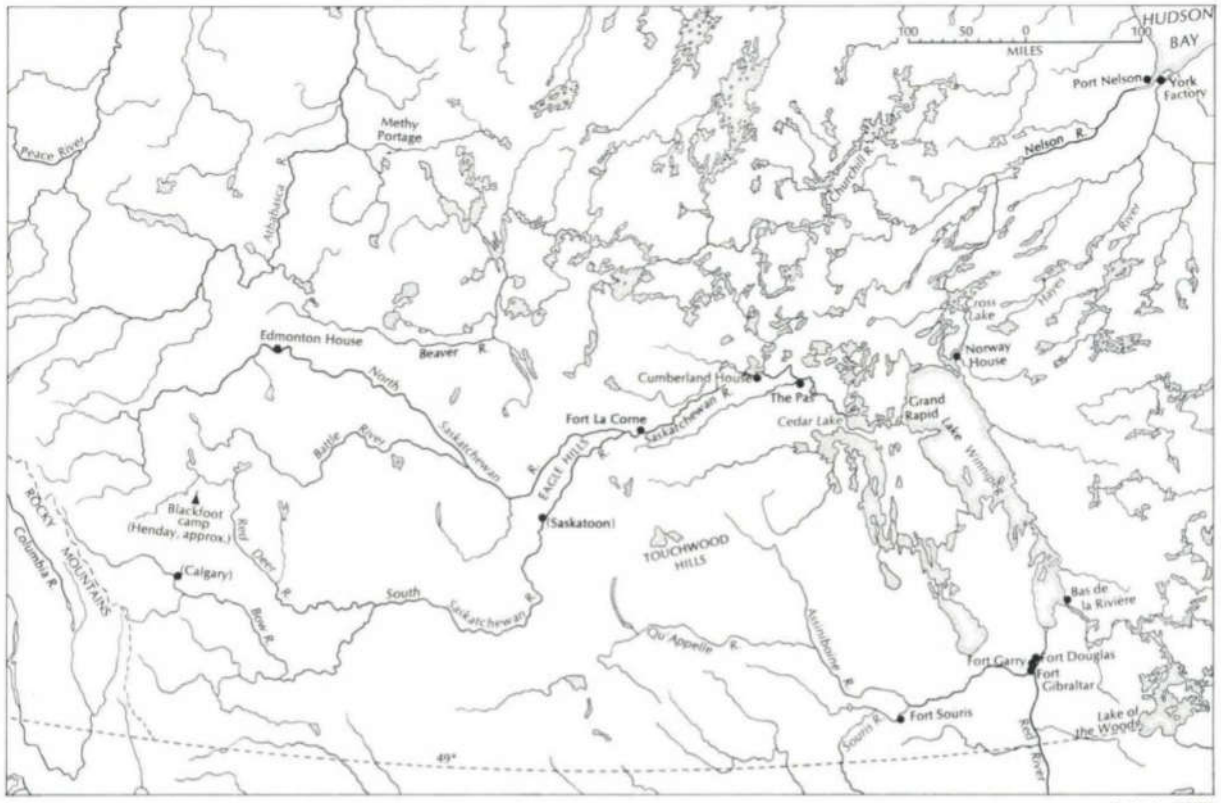
There the matter rested until the present century. When in 1926 a collection of Arthur Dobbs's papers was presented to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, they were found to contain a manuscript volume inscribed 'Henry Kelsey his Book . . .' This included not only a fuller version of the July-September 1691 journal than that printed in 1749, but also a rhyming prologue which described Kelsey's travels in 1690, and established the approximate location of Dering's Point. In general, the manuscript confirmed the Company's version of Kelsey's journal, and historians have long pondered how and when the volume came into Dobbs's possession. If before 1752, then it says little for his veracity and much for his unscrupulousness. In one respect, though, Kelsey's own words contradict Geyer's account of his cheerful departure for the interior in 1690; for the crudely-rhyming couplets tell of foreboding as well as determination:

In sixteen hundred & ninety'th year
I set forth as plainly may appear
Through Gods assistance for to understand
The natives language & to see their land
And for my masters interest I did soon
Sett from ye house ye twealth of June
Then up ye River I with heavy heart
Did take my way & from all English part
To live amongst ye Natives of this place
If god permits me for one two years space
The Inland Country of Good report hath been
By Indians but by English yet not seen . . .

Kelsey's routes have inevitably led to much speculation, but there is general agreement that Dering's Point, 'ye place of resortance when they [the Indians] are coming down to trade' was at or near The Pas on the Saskatchewan, that great highway of intertribal trade. From here Kelsey accompanied his Cree Indians to the northern plains for the winter, entering a region never before seen by a European. In the summer of 1691 he was back at Dering's Point where the Crees returning from their annual journey to York brought him fresh supplies from Geyer. Kelsey once more accompanied the trading Crees back to the plains to follow the Stone (Assiniboine) Indians who had already passed him at Dering's Point, and above all, 'to discover and bring to a Commerce the Naywatame Poets'. The July-September 1691 journal now gives a reasonable amount of detail of a route which in the next two months took Kelsey—according to his own estimate—585 miles farther inland, southwest across the Saskatchewan and Red Deer rivers, and possibly as far as the Touchwood Hills. Kelsey was on the great plains of western Canada, thick with the herds of uncountable buffalo, with an Indian population far more numerous than any the Hudson's Bay men knew. Away to the north the prairie broke into wooded areas where moose, deer, and beaver were plentiful, and the lakes were full of fish—to men who had known only the harsh hinterland of Hudson Bay an unbelievably lush region. As Matthew Cocking was to write on a later journey to the great plains 'A Plentiful Country of Provision, for an Indian need only mount his Horse taking his gun or bow, and in a short time return with his horse loaded. . . '

Part of Kelsey's rhyming prologue to the 1960 journey, from the volume in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (Ref. D162/7).





C. C. J. BOND

Kelsey's party soon overtook the Assiniboine Indians, and in September at last encountered the mysterious 'Naywatame' Indians, who were probably Atsina (often referred to as Fall or Gros Ventres Indians), members of the Blackfoot group. Their fears of attack by the Cree with their fire-arms is plain even in Kelsey's brief and ungrammatical account of the council he held with the 'Naywatame' leader, who was impressed enough by Kelsey's gifts and assurance of better behaviour by the Cree to agree to meet him at Dering's Point in the spring and accompany him to York; but when Kelsey waited there at the appointed time he heard that two of the 'Naywatame' had been killed by Cree during the winter, and that they were afraid to come down. Kelsey's only consolation was that the 'unnumerable' beaver of the region would be brought down to the Bay by other means, and with this thought he returned to York with a flotilla of canoes much greater than usual.

Kelsey's journey was a remarkable achievement. The key to its success was Kelsey's ability to speak Cree, and to live and travel safely with the Indians. This accomplishment moved the late A. S. Morton to write of Kelsey: 'He is our first example of that comparatively rare species, the Indianized Englishman'. He was the first European to reach the Saskatchewan and the Canadian prairies, and the first to leave a description of the grizzly bear and bison—'a great sort of Bear wch is Bigger then any white Bear & is Neither White nor Black But silver hair'd like our English Rabbit ye Buffillo Likewise is not like those to ye Northward [the muskox] their Horns growing like an English Ox but Black and short'. But for long Kelsey's travels were obscured by his apparent failure to keep full journals, the Company's neglect in keeping his notes, and the malevolent accusations of Dobbs and Robson. No evidence of Kelsey's explorations ever appeared on contemporary maps, and even the commercial results of his journey were nebulous. His efforts to make peace among the inland tribes were largely unavailing, and the wars and long French occupation of York prevented any attempt to exploit his magnificent journey. It was an isolated feat in an era when, despite occasional promptings by the London Committee, Company servants were reluctant to move away from the familiar environment of the Bayside posts. The lack of birch and cedar for canoes at York, the determination of the Committee to keep a tight control over its servants and trade, and official disapproval of cohabitation with Indian women, all tended to reinforce the existing Company policy of persuading the Indians to come down to the Bay posts to trade. Whether in London or in the Bay the Company displayed little enthusiasm for the French method of encouraging traders to push far inland with their goods, and make contact with the Indian hunters and trappers on their own territories.

For more than a half-century after Kelsey's journey the only explorations of the interior of any note were the ventures of William Stuart (1715-16) and Richard Norton (1717-18) northwest among the Chipewyan

HBC COLLN

Valued for meat and skins, in a later century the bison hunt by Indians and Métis, depicted in a watercolour by Peter Rindisbacher c. 1823, was an important source of food for the fur traders.

Indians, and neither left any direct record of his wanderings. On the inland routes west from Lake Superior and beyond Winnipeg it was the French who were the next to follow Kelsey's path. Until about 1730 competition between the Hudson's Bay traders and the French *coureurs de bois* was only acute at the Bottom of the Bay, but with the far-ranging explorations of the Sieur de la Vérendrye in the 1730s and 1740s the threat to the Company's trade moved steadily westward towards the hinterland of York and Churchill. In quest of furs and the fabled *Mer de l'Ouest*, La Vérendrye and his sons penetrated far to the west, beyond Lake Winnipeg and onto the Lower Saskatchewan. Here, as Kelsey had found, was a vital strategic area for the fur trade; the area where the Indians from the northwest and those from the prairies met and traded with each other. As the younger Chevalier de la Vérendrye put it, this was 'the rendezvous every spring of the Crees of the Mountains, Prairies and Rivers to deliberate as to what they shall do—go and trade with the French or with the English'. By 1753 the line of French posts had reached as far as Fort La Corne near the Forks of the Saskatchewan. French traders were now active on the Indian canoe routes down to the Bay all the way from Moose to Churchill. As Dobbs had feared, the French were not only posed to capture the fur trade of the northwest, but were inexorably fencing off the shore-based English from the great central plains of North America.

In the Bay French competition had its most alarming impact on York, where James Isham was still factor. Despite his gloomy warning to the Parliamentary Committee in 1749 of the difficulties of inland expansion, Isham had long been worried about the Company's immobility in face of the French threat. As early as 1743 he had written, 'what is the most Concer'n is to see us sitt quiet & unconcern'd while the french as an old saying, not only Beats the Bush but runs away with the Hair also'; and had suggested that Company servants should be sent far inland to induce the Indians to come down to trade. In 1752 he again put this proposal to the London Committee, which, perhaps more sensitive since the Dobbs imbroglio to allegations that it neglected the interior, agreed with its York factor.

At York a 'bold, enterprizing' servant, Anthony Henday, volunteered to go inland. He had been in the Company's service only since 1750, was employed in the humble capacity of labourer and net-maker, and except for a short trip along the Hayes and Nelson rivers had no experience of inland travelling. Yet Henday's journey was to exceed Kelsey's both in extent and commercial importance. His method of travelling and his objectives were much the same as Kelsey's: he was to go inland with a party of returning Cree as far as the country of the 'Archithinue' Indians (Atsina), and try to persuade them —despite their lack of canoes—to come down to the Bay to trade.

It is one of the ironies of the history of the Canadian West that the journals of some of its most significant explorers—Radisson, Kelsey, La France, Pond—present ineluctable problems of reliability and even authenticity. Henday's journal is no exception. It exists in no fewer than four versions in the Company archives, none of them in his own hand: one sent to London from York in 1755, and three which are contained in various volumes of Andrew Graham's manuscript 'Observations' written later in the century. No version appears to be simply a copy of another, but the most startling difference between them is that the copy sent to the London Committee is not only the least informative of the four, but on the most important aspects of the venture is utterly unreliable.

Henday left York in June 1754, furnished with a compass and writing paper, and accompanied the returning Cree along their canoe route onto the Lower Saskatchewan. There he found 'a Hogstye' of a French post at Basquia (The Pas), and traders who threatened to detain him and even send him prisoner to France. Already the journals differ. In that sent home in 1755 Henday cuts a bold figure: 'I told him I knew France as well as he did, and was not afraid to go there more then himself, which made Monsieur a little cooler'. The other versions show Henday in more diffident mood: '. . . at night I went to my tent and told my [Indian] leader that had the charge of me, who only laughed and said they dar'd not'. After this encounter Henday's party moved across the south branch of the Saskatchewan, over prairie-land to the north branch, and then west and southwest searching for the Archithinue Indians. At the end of July Henday met his first Assiniboine, whose reaction to Henday's proposals was depicted very differently in the various journals. In that sent to London, Henday's entry of 31 July is cheerfully optimistic: 'This day came to us ten tents of Senipoets. I went and smoakt with them, they all promised to go with me to the fort next spring'. In other versions Henday struck a gloomier note:

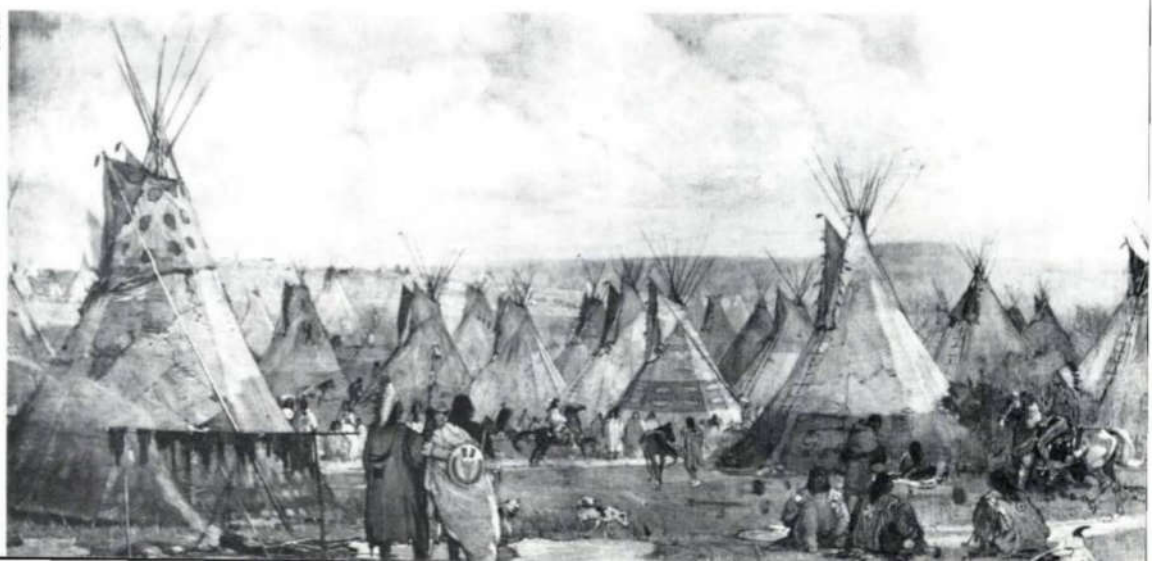
> . . . came to 10 tents of Aseenepoet Indians; being now entered their country. I went and smoaked and talked with them to go with me to the fort in the summer, but they answered, we are more conveniently supplyed from the french houses. I said that the french gave them little for their furs, but all I said signified nothing. I found them strongly attached to the french Interest.

In September Henday saw for the first time the great buffalo herds of the plains, 'grazing like English cattle, and of the same size, and black having a hump between their shoulders, and short black horns'. They were so numerous that Henday's party had to 'make them sheer out of our way', and when the Indians killed them they took only the tongue and other delicacies—the rest of the vast carcass was left to the wolves. A day or two later Henday saw for himself the strength of the grizzly bear, for one of them hideously mangled two Indians. Then in mid-October, somewhere south of Red Deer River, Henday came across the Archithinue Indians, the horsed Atsina of the prairies. Their camp was an impressive sight: two hundred tents pitched in two rows through which horsemen escorted Henday to the tent of the 'Great Leader', seated on a buffalo skin surrounded by his councillors. In the journal sent to the London Committee all went well: 'the Earchithinues say they will go with me to the fort and see the Governor . . . they are mad for guns, knives, hatchets etc. and have told them there is great plenty of all sorts of goods at the fort'. The other versions report the conversation in inexplicably different terms:

> by an interpreter I told him what I was sent for, and desired him to allow some of his young men to go down to the fort with me, where they would be well used and get guns, powder and shot etc. to which he answered, it was far off, and they could not live without buffaloes flesh, and that they never would leave their horses, and many other obstacles which I think very just, the chief of which was, they never wanted provisions.

Henday was with Indians closely related to those seen by Kelsey more than sixty years earlier on the prairies, and the lack of any mention in Kelsey's journal of the horses which feature so prominently in Henday's narrative lends weight to the hypothesis of those anthropologists who date the acquisition of horses by the Blackfoot of the northern plains to the period after 1740.

After this meeting with the equestrian Indians Henday's party drifted farther west, and for much of November and December 1754 would seem to have been in the Bow River and Red Deer River area, and within sight of the Rocky Mountains. It is one of the several puzzles of Henday's journals that they nowhere mention this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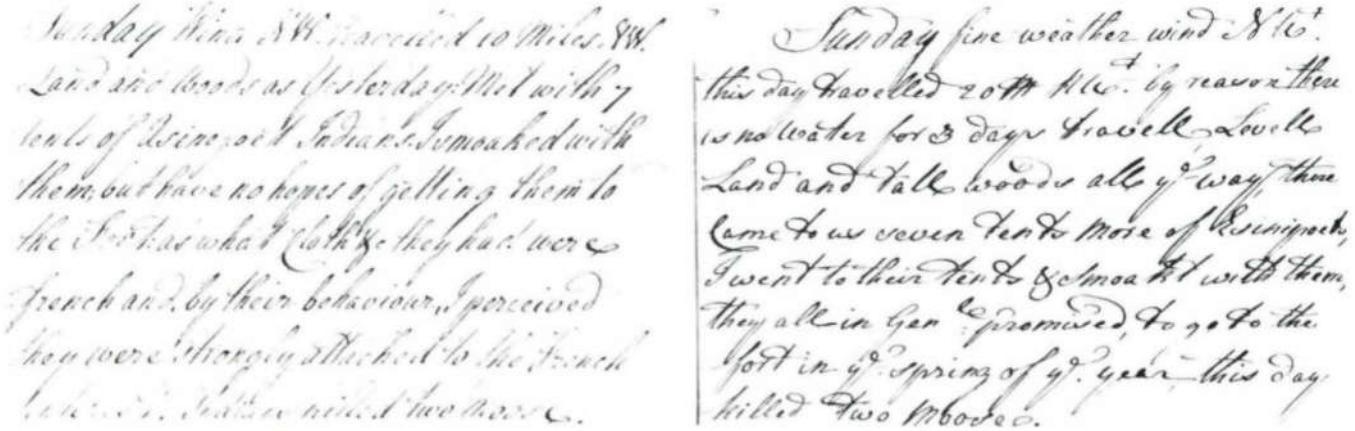
An encampment of Plains Indians such as Henday might have entered on his exploration to the West. From a mural by Frederick S. Challener.



Differing versions of Henday's journal in the Company archives (E. 2/11 and B. 239/a) for 4 August 1754.

stupendous mountain barrier, and the identification which some historians have read into the entry of 24 December seems to the present writer to be without foundation. On that date an entry in the journal sent home to the Committee (B.239/a/40) shows that Henday was '. . . on the top of a Hill, where I had a fine view of Arsinie Watchie att a farr distance it being the last sight that I ever shall have of it this year'. More than one historian has speculated that 'Arsinie Watchie' represents the Cree term for stony or rocky hills, and that Henday was therefore referring to the Rocky Mountains; but confidence in this argument is shaken by the entries for the same date in the other versions, which refer instead to 'a fine view of the muscuty country', and by a note for 29 October (in E.2/6) where Henday explains: 'I have been since the 13th. of august in muscuty plains; the Indians calls the Achithinne Country by another name, which is Arsinee Warchee (i.e. dry country)'.

As he continued to travel with his small party of Cree Henday gradually developed an insight into Indian trading patterns. His anxious efforts to persuade his companions to trap furs were treated with derision, and he had to rely on his Indian woman for enlightenment: 'my bedfellow informs me that . . . they would get more wolves and beaver etc. from the Archithinnes and Aseenepoets than they could carry . . . she said that the Indians that traded at York Fort were supplyed by them, and that we should see them in the spring'. As usual, the journal sent home contains none of this, and the normal explanation that this section was cut because of the Committee's opposition to liaisons between its servants and Indian women does not hold water. In one of the other versions the phrase, 'my bedfellow informs me . . .' was replaced by the more innocuous 'an Indian informs me . . .'; but the substance of the passage remained the same. In May 1755, when Henday's party once more encountered the Archithinue Indians, he saw for himself the system described by his woman. His Cree companions traded many skins of all types from the huge Atsina encampment, and Henday himself obtained thirty wolf skins. One of the most revealing results of Henday's travels was his discovery that the Cree and Assiniboine who came down to York were middlemen, and that most of the furs that were traded at the factory had been trapped by Indians of the far interior who never visited the Bay posts.

A considerable fleet of canoes had by now assembled for the long trip to York, but first it had to run the gauntlet of the French posts on the Lower Saskatchewan. On 23 May 1755 Henday, in company with sixty canoes, reached Fort La Corne. 'He got but very little trade' blandly reported Henday of the French master in the official version of his journal, but the other versions again read differently: 'the master gave the natives 10 gallons of adulterated brandy and has traded from them above 1000 of the finest skins . . . I cannot get them to proceed, it's surprizing to observe what great influence the French hath over the natives'. At Basquia the same process was repeated. The official journal entries for 30 and 31 May record only that 'the Indians are bussy talking etc' and 'the Indians are mending their canoes'. The other versions show a much more alarming state of affairs:

> obliged to lie by, could not get the natives away, they have traded the most valuable furs; I breakfasted etc. with the master, and he showed me his stock of furs, a brave parcel of cassed cats, martins, and parchment beaver; their birch rine canoes will carry as much as a long-boat, and draws little water, and are so light that two men can carry one of them with ease some miles . . . the Frenchmen are masters of all the Indian languages and have greatly the advantage of us . . .

Although when Henday reached York on 20 June he was accompanied by an imposing brigade of seventy canoes, many of the best and lightest furs had gone to the French. In a single journey Henday had revealed not only the complex pattern of Indian trade in the interior; he had also confirmed the way in which the French posts on the Saskatchewan were intercepting the Cree and Assiniboine traders on their way to the Bay. His unexpurgated journals provided powerful arguments for serious inland penetration, preferably accompanied by the establishment of interior posts. The journal which the Committee received included a plea to this effect at the end; but its

daily entries contained little that was illuminating and much that was downright misleading on commercial matters. This perhaps explains why there was no immediate reaction to Henday's venture. The Committee acknowledged the value of inland journeys, and after Henday's return others were organized from York which certainly helped to counteract the pressure of the French traders on the Lower Saskatchewan. But further than this the Committee was not prepared to go. As it told Isham, 'we cannot find by his said Journal or Draft that any Settlement (the thing you seemed so desirous of) can be made with the least appearance of advantage . . .' Annotating many years later one of his copies of Henday's journal, Andrew Graham hinted at continued local opposition in the Bay to inland expansion: 'The Accounts of Horsemen being Inland were not credited: He Henday was misrepresented by those in the Bay who were not acting a just part to the Company, and he perceiving not likely to meet with promotion he had so deservedly merited quitted the Company's service' in 1762.

In the years following Henday's journey events seemed to justify the Company's reluctance to move inland. The North American campaigns of the Seven Years War first distracted and then crippled the French in Canada, and the Montreal-based fur trade suffered in consequence. The conquest of Canada meant that in 1759 and 1760 the western posts of the French traders lay quiet and deserted. As the war drew to a close the whole fur trade of an immense area stretching as far as the Rockies seemed about to fall into the Company's hands. ◆

V CUMBERLAND HOUSE THE MOVE INLAND

Samuel Hearne, who in 1744 established Cumberland House.

THE SOLITARY DOMINANCE of the Hudson's Bay Company in the western fur trade after the collapse of the French cause in Canada was short-lived; it vanished almost before the London Committee realized the opportunity presented. The old French river routes out of Montreal to the west were soon in use again, this time by traders whose resources were far greater than those of the Company's former rivals. Many of the French canoemen and interpreters remained, but they were now supported in Quebec, Montreal, and Michilimackinac by the capital and organization of thrustful businessmen from the British Isles and the American colonies. Loosely organized in a series of fluctuating partnerships and syndicates, the new traders could call on the credit facilities, quality trade goods and marketing techniques of the London business world, and presented a far deadlier commercial menace to the Hudson's Bay Company than the French had ever done.

At the Bottom of the Bay the Company became involved once more in a tough, close-fought struggle for trade; a battle over familiar ground in which there was little scope for either victory or disaster on a spectacular scale. But away to the west, beyond Lake Winnipeg and on to the Saskatchewan and the plains, lay greater commercial prizes in territory as yet only thinly exploited by the fur traders. By the summer of 1766 Andrew Graham, acting factor at York, was uneasily aware of the return of competition in a new guise on the Saskatchewan. In June canoes of Indians arrived at York without either marten or coat beaver; these had been traded with 'English pedlars inland'. To counter this opposition Graham relied on the York policy pursued since Henday's day of sending servants inland among the Indians to bring them down to trade; and in 1766 six men left York for the interior on separate expeditions which covered between them a great arc of country from Churchill River to Red Deer River. On his return to his own post farther down the coast at Severn Graham heard fresh reports about pedlar activities inland, and in 1767 he sent William Tomison inland to Lake Winnipeg 'to see and examine what game was going on above us'. Tomison arrived back at Severn the next year with depressing news, 'the English and French traders daily taking what furs the natives catches. He says he did all he could to

prevent them, but to no purpose, they making him this answer, "The French are nigh hand us, and it is a long way to go to your factories".' He saw and noted the influence of Indianized Frenchmen such as Franceway or François, better known inland by his Indian name of Saswe, who was probably the first French Canadian to return to the Saskatchewan after the Conquest.

Back at York after a year's furlough in England, factor Ferdinand Jacobs was soon convinced of the weight of Graham's warnings. 1768 saw a staggering fall in York's trade from the 30,000 Made Beaver average of the previous ten years to little more than 18,000; and Jacobs sent an urgent report on the deteriorating situation to the London Committee:

> The Canada pedlars are got in the very heart of the trading Indians' country that comes to this place, and have sent several very large canoes loaded with the best of the furs down to Canada, and are coming again this autumn in greater numbers and with quantities of goods which will enable them to rob your Honours of most of next year's trade. This affair has affected me more than anything that ever happened to me, and what grieves me most is, it is not possible to put a stop to it unless they are compelled by force to retreat off your lands . . . These pedlars being in the centre of the trading Indians is a great inducement to them to trade their furs with them, which saves them the carriage of several hundred miles. Your servants amongst them have not the least influence to put a stop to it, and was present while the pedlars traded a great part of the very Indians' furs they were with.

Jacobs went on to recommend that instead of individual servants being sent inland, a group of them, perhaps as many as twenty-five, should move into the interior in a more purposeful manner to establish posts. Since large birch-bark canoes were unobtainable at York, these posts should be supplied by longboats.

The reply of the London Committee to this radical proposal was unenthusiastic. In recent years the Company had borne heavy losses connected with the establishment of Richmond on the Eastmain coast, and the black whale fishery at Churchill; but not only financial considerations weighed with the Committee. As the chequered history of Henley House, upstream from Albany, had shown, inland posts involved greater problems of private trade and trapping, relations with Indian women, and indiscriminate use of alcohol, than at the more closely supervised Bayside factories. Jacobs was told that he could not send more than six men inland in any one year, and they should have only a small supply of goods with which to establish a temporary summer post. Faced with these restrictions, Jacobs accomplished little before he returned to England on leave in 1771.

Once more a question had surfaced which had already been an issue in Isham's day: the general advisability of inland posts. Isham had advocated the establishment of a post in the interior after Henday's return in 1755, and had been firmly put in his place by the London Committee, which had support for its views among the Bay factors. Even Graham, friend and admirer of Isham though he was, thought inland posts an unnecessary extravagance. The example of Henley House, the only inland post the Company possessed, and that an outstation a mere hundred miles from Albany, confirmed his suspicion that furs traded at inland establishments would be at the expense of the Bayside posts. The only inland post for which Graham thought there was any case was one on the Saskatchewan, and even this would involve a laborious and expensive journey from the Bay—'All the discovered rivers are so shoal, full of cataracts and long land carriages, that with great difficulty, expense and attended with the utmost confusion, birch-rind canoes would not be got up to Keskachewan River with a trifle of goods in less than four months'. In a sentence curious as coming from one who had felt the weight of pedlar competition at both York and Severn Graham asserted 'that however advantageous it may be to 2 or 3 poor pedlars from Canada to drive a wretched and vagabond life after a few furs, I do not think it is, and am certain it would not be worth the notice of an Honourable Company of Gentlemen to follow such pitiful game'. The fall in York's trade Graham attributed to bad management at the post—a dig at Ferdinand Jacobs—and to the indolence and warlike habits of the Plains Cree, who were no longer fulfilling their traditional role as middlemen of the fur trade among the Assiniboine and Blackfoot of the prairies. His solution to the problem was an improvement in the running of York, the adoption of a more flexible standard of trade with the Indians, and the sending of two 'diligent, sensible men' among the Plains Cree and Assiniboine each year. Then, concluded Graham, 'I will pass my word we will keep up the Company's trade much the same as formerly, and even overturn all the schemes of the Canadian pilferers without applying to birch-rind canoes and such like wild schemes'.

Although Graham had no success in his campaign to displace Jacobs at York, in 1769 the Committee introduced a new trade standard which gave the Indians better terms for prime marten, bears, and foxes. The revised standard did little to help trade at York, as Graham found when he served there once more as acting factor in 1771-2. The trade for the season was little more than 21,000 Made Beaver and, as Graham wrote of one party of Indians that came down, 'they are poorly gooded, and what furs they have brought are the refuse of the Canadian pedlars'. One particularly ominous piece of news was that the pedlar Thomas Corry, who had been seen on Lake Winnipeg with seven large canoes full of furs, was accompanied by the influential Indian leader, Wappenessew, who had served the Company faithfully since Henday's time. To rub salt into the wound, Corry sent Graham a scrawled letter passing on a message from Wappenessew: 'he hopes you will knot Bee angri with him as he has Drunk so much Brandy this winter he canot Com . . .' Graham added that Wappenessew lived in Corry's house and ate with him—a domestic note which reflected a significant difference in attitude between the Canadians, living in close contact with the Indians, and the more aloof Bayside officers who saw the

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Early inland posts depended on canoes for transport and competitors from south and east made good use of birchbark canoes and expert voyageurs. 'Canoes in Fog' by Frances A. Hopkins shows a later brigade (1869), with passengers.

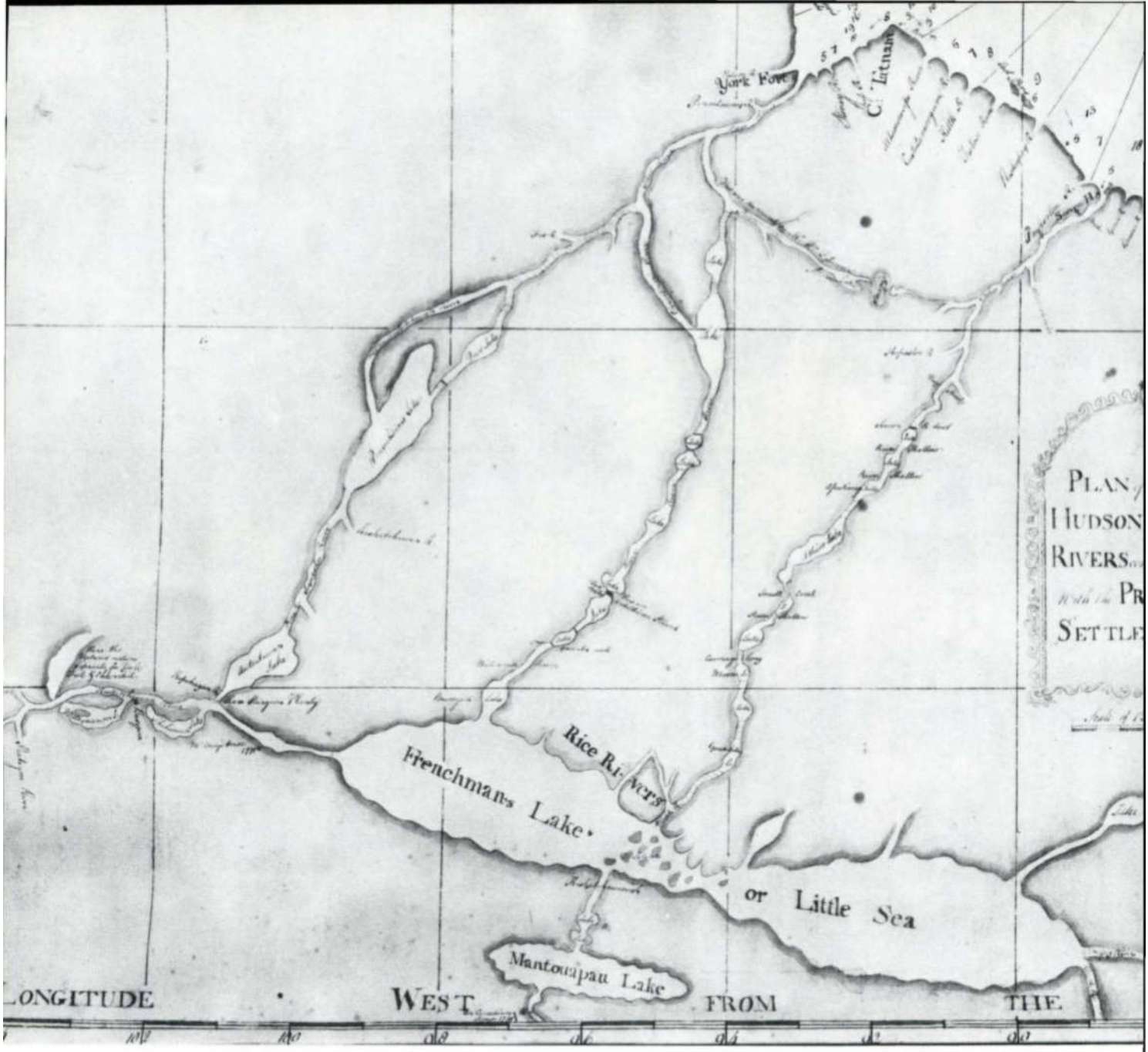
trading Indians only once a year. Intimacy with the Indians could have its perils as well as its commercial benefits, but certainly the proximity of the pedlars to their Indian traders and trappers left the Company at a pronounced disadvantage in this period of intensifying competition.

The gravity of the situation at York produced an abrupt change of mind by Graham. In August 1772 he wrote to the London Committee announcing that unless inland posts were established the Company's western trade would be ruined by the Canadians. The threat they posed he expressed to the Committee in simple, pithy terms:

> The Indians resort to them in the winter for ammunition, and the whole body of the natives build their canoes not far distant from the residence of the traders, and finding they can procure tobacco and other necessaries so near, and being in liquor, every inducement to visit the Company's Factories is forgot, and the prime furs are picked out and traded. The refuse is tied up and brought down to us . . .

Graham gave specific instances of the damage inflicted on the Company's trade. On their return journey to York two of the Company's inland travellers, Isaac Batt and the Canadian Louis Primeau, were suddenly deserted by their accompanying fleets of 160 canoes. The Indians, once they heard that Canadians were at Cedar Lake with brandy and trade goods, 'wheeled off to go thither, notwithstanding all the arguments of our men to the contrary'. From John Cole, one of Corry's men who had left him and come down to York, Graham learned details of the mercantile organizations in the east which supported the pedlars in the field. No longer did Graham refer contemptuously to 'poor pedlars' leading 'a wretched and vagabond life'; instead he argued that Canadian competition could be met only by the establishment of a Company post at The Pas, stocked with ammunition, Brazil tobacco, and brandy. The last Graham now deemed essential, though earlier he had criticized the indiscriminate use of alcohol by some Company factors and by the Canadians in general. The Company's official rule was that alcohol should be traded only for certain prime furs, notably marten; but as it moved inland to compete for the Indians' custom it shifted nearer the Canadian practice, summed up by Duncan McGillivray when he wrote of the Indians: 'The lure of Rum is their first inducement to industry; they undergo every hardship and fatigue to procure Skinfuls of this delicious beverage . . .'

In anticipation of the Committee's approval of his plan Graham took certain practical steps. John Cole, who had assured him he could guide large canoes from York to the Saskatchewan in forty days, was sent inland at enhanced wages to bring back two of these canoes and a Canadian acquaintance, John Bove. A Canadian, Cole had told a suitably impressed Graham, thought nothing of carrying two 80 lb. packs for three miles. Matthew Cocking had already left York for the interior, with strict instructions from Graham to keep a detailed journal with precise locations of possible post-sites. Having done all possible to set the inland venture in motion Graham returned to Severn, and Jacobs once more took over at York. From Severn Graham wrote again of the disadvantage the Company suffered without inland posts—'the match is really unequal'. The York returns for 1773 at the derisory figure of 8,000 Made Beaver, supported his view, as did



Section of Graham's map illustrating his London Letter of 1722 showing communication from York Fort and Severn House to the Saskatchewan and Lakes Winnipeg (Frenchman's) and Manitoba (Mantouapau). Basquia (The Pas) is shown at extreme left, east of it 'Mr Corry's House 1771', and below Mantouapau 'the Canadian House 1770'.

Cocking's report when he returned to York in the summer of 1773. In a journey which at its farthest extent reached well beyond the Saskatchewan to the Eagle Hills he had found repeated instances of Canadian influence over the Indians, and he endorsed Graham's opinion that a post on the Saskatchewan was essential if York's inland trade was to be saved.

In London the Committee had reached a decision before it received Cocking's journal or the disturbing letters from Jacobs and Graham in the autumn of 1773. In addition to Graham's letter and map of the previous August it had heard the first-hand testimony of Isaac Batt, one of York's most experienced inland travellers; and in May 1773 the Committee decided that a settlement should be established at or near The Pas under the command of Samuel Hearne, lately returned from his journey to the Arctic Ocean. This decision marks the beginning of a new era in the Company's history. For the first time a post was to be established far inland to trade with the Indians in direct competition with the Canadians. Responsibility for the change must be shared. The reports of the Company servants inland had long implied the necessity for a more active policy in the interior, and in 1768 Jacobs had written forcibly in favour of an inland

post. Dr Richard Glover has recently argued that Jacobs' plan, with its proposed reliance on boats rather than canoes, was better suited to the Company's position than that outlined by Graham, and certainly if the Committee had been more responsive in 1768-9 to Jacobs' urgings the Company might well have established a dominant position on the Saskatchewan before its Canadian competitors arrived in force. But the importance of Graham's belated conversion should not be underestimated. His persuasive and urgent letter of 1772 appears to have been the decisive factor in forcing the Committee to accept the logic of developments in the Bay; and it was Graham's plan, with its choice of The Pas as the site of the new post, its use of canoes, and its suggestion that Hearne should be considered as leader of the expedition, which was now put into operation.

A series of misfortunes and delays prevented the inland venture setting off in 1773. The Committee's letter of authorization did not reach York until the normal shiptime of August, while Cole was unable to procure the large canoes Graham had ordered, failed to bring Bove into the Company's service, and soon deserted. The next summer Hearne at last got away, but his expedition of a dozen men (collected with difficulty) had to rely on getting lifts inland from the Indians on their return journey, and so had to travel individually and at intervals in the small two-man Indian canoes. Hearne and two others got away in June, but half his party never joined him. As he moved inland, Hearne had cause to lament the lost year of 1773, a time of exceptional Pedlar activity; for when he reached The Pas in July he heard the depressing news that 'the Pedlors by this time has to much influance, and that I ware to late in comeing'. Undeterred, Hearne pushed on sixty miles beyond The Pas, and at Pine Island Lake just north of the Saskatchewan built the first Cumberland House—a rudimentary log shack. The post was even better situated than the Canadian posts at and around The Pas, for several Indian trade routes met at this point before they reached the area of Pedlar activity. Moreover, the Company had the priceless advantage, to quote Hearne, that 'The Distance from York Fort into these Parts Is much nearer then from any Part of Canady'. But Hearne sounded a warning note when he stressed 'the greatest obstical' facing the Company inland, the lack of canoes. The Company's strategic advantage of a shorter route to the Saskatchewan was nullified by the inability of its servants in this period to master the techniques of inland travel. An individual venture among the Indians with a few parcels of trade goods was one thing; the organization of a reliable, full-scale transportation system quite another. Although cargo canoes had long been in use between Albany and Henley away to the south, neither the cedar nor the white canoe-birch grew as far north as York; and Hearne's efforts to persuade the inland Indians to build him canoes met with little success. His journal entry for 24 May 1775 told of his helplessness and disappointment:

> This day most of the Indians went away with their famalies Several of which Promoused to build me large Cannoes, & tho I have been dayly giving them every thing they asks for to Encourage them there to, yet, as soon as their own Cannoes ware finished, they all set off to have a drink of the Pedlors Rum . . . so that out of 6 large Cannoes which I Expected to have had made under my own Inspection, I have but one.

Even when canoes were obtainable, canoemen were not; and for long the Company was forced to rely on the unpredictable results of hiring Indians to work the canoes. It possessed no equivalent of the Canadian *voyageurs*, 'those natural water Dogs', as a later Company servant described them, who handled the light but capacious *canot du nord* with consummate skill.

The foothold at Cumberland House, 450 miles from York in a direct line, nearer 700 by canoe, was a precarious one. So short of supplies in the first winter that Hearne was soon worrying about the morale of his men—'it is with the greatest difficulty I can Preswade them from thinking that Entire famine must Ensew', reliant on the Indians for transport, surrounded by perhaps 150 Canadian traders, the post appeared to be woefully inadequate to meet the challenge of the Pedlars. But it was the beginning—of almost half a century of stern and sometimes violent competition in the northern fur trade, and of a westward expansion by the Company which was to take it in the end to the Pacific. ◆

Pine Island, right, site of Cumberland House, with the old channel of the Saskatchewan on left.

R. A. SMITH 1969

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Boats, introduced in 1797 for the inland traffic, proved more efficient than the great canoes. This replica York boat on the Red River has just dropped its sail approaching Lower Fort Garry.

VI FUR TRADE RIVALRY

AS EARLY AS the summer of 1775 Hearne realized that Cumberland House on its own could offer only feeble competition to the Canadians. 'To undersell the Pedlors in all Quarters', he insisted, the Company must establish a whole network of inland posts. Four years later Philip Turnor, first of the dedicated surveyors who served the Company so well in this period, wrote in agreement: 'Cumberland House in my opinion can be called nothing but a Warehouse or be looked upon a halfway house for other Settlements'. The need to expand was the more urgent because the Canadians had pushed farther along the Saskatchewan, bypassing the little post on Pine Island Lake, while back in the east they were tightening and rationalizing their organization. In Montreal there were new groupings of traders, sometimes using the name 'North West Company', from 1776 onwards; and their efficiency and enterprise cut the long westward journey of the Pedlars by shifting the main supply base to Grand Portage at the western end of Lake Superior. Instead of taking their furs down to Michilimackinac, or often all the way to Montreal, the Pedlars left them at Grand Portage and picked up fresh supplies there. In 1778 that turbulent fur trade character, Peter Pond, did not even come down to Grand Portage; using supplies still left in the trading areas he moved northwest across the height of land at the Methy portage and into Athabasca. His journey was not only a notable, if ill-defined, feat of exploration; it was an immensely successful fur trading venture. When Pond came out of Athabasca in 1779 he had traded the shirt off his back, and had collected so many fine black beaver skins that he had to leave some behind.

Pond's revelation of the rich fur country of Athabasca helped to prompt the formation in 1779 of a sixteen-share partnership of merchants which was to emerge in 1783 in recognizable form as the famous North West Company, dominated by Simon McTavish, 'the Marquis' of the fur trade, and the Frobisher brothers. The North West Company was to capture the imagination of Canadians in a way which the London-based Hudson's Bay Company was never able to do. Of the many historians who have written on the North Westers none has captured their spirit better than W. S. Wallace:

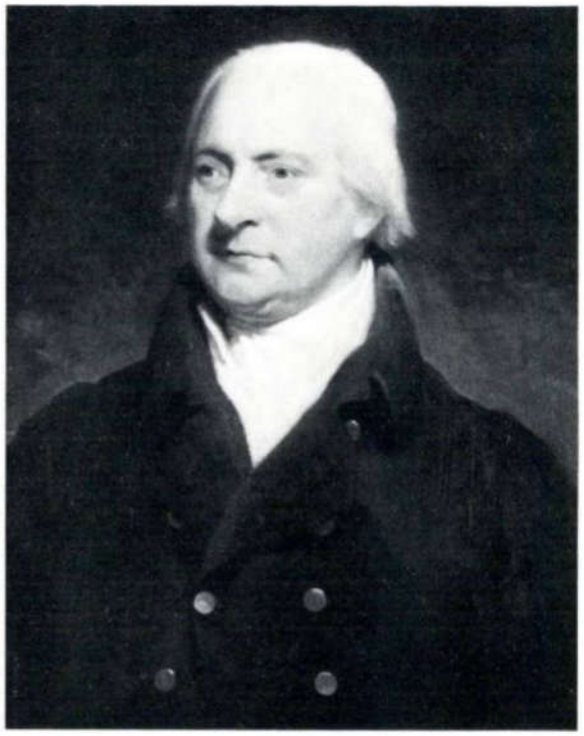
> The names of the North West Company partners sound like a roll-call of the clans of Culloden. These men were hardy, courageous, shrewd and proud. They spent a good part of their lives travelling incredible distances in birch-bark canoes, shooting rapids, and navigating inland seas. They were wrecked and drowned. They suffered hunger and starvation. They were robbed and murdered by the Indians, and sometimes by one another. They fell the victims of smallpox, syphilis and rum. Yet they conquered half a continent, and

they built up a commercial empire, the like of which North America at least has never seen.

The Company was a loose copartnership which underwent several reorganizations and changes of personnel, but for thirty years it represented a magnificent union of organization and enterprise. The endurance of its *voyageurs* and the tenacity of its wintering partners would have gone for nothing without the smooth co-ordination of the transportation system which moved goods from Montreal to Grand Portage with amazing regularity each summer. The rapid expansion along the Saskatchewan and into Athabasca would have collapsed without the mundane business of collecting pemmican on the prairies to supply the brigades and to cache along the western routes through the forest belt. The North Westers were flamboyant and colourful; and they were ruthless, both towards competitors and towards the Indians on whose co-operation they depended—it was no accident that the North Westers rather than the Hudson's Bay men suffered most from Indian attacks. Pond, suspected of two murders away in the wilderness, was more reckless than most; but Alexander Mackenzie was not allowing his association with a rival Montreal concern to influence him unduly when he wrote that the North West Company had in 1787 allowed him and his partners a share of the trade only 'After the severest struggle ever known in that part of the world, and suffering every oppression that a jealous and rival spirit could instigate; after the murder of one of our partners, the laming of another, and the narrow escape of one of our clerks . . .'

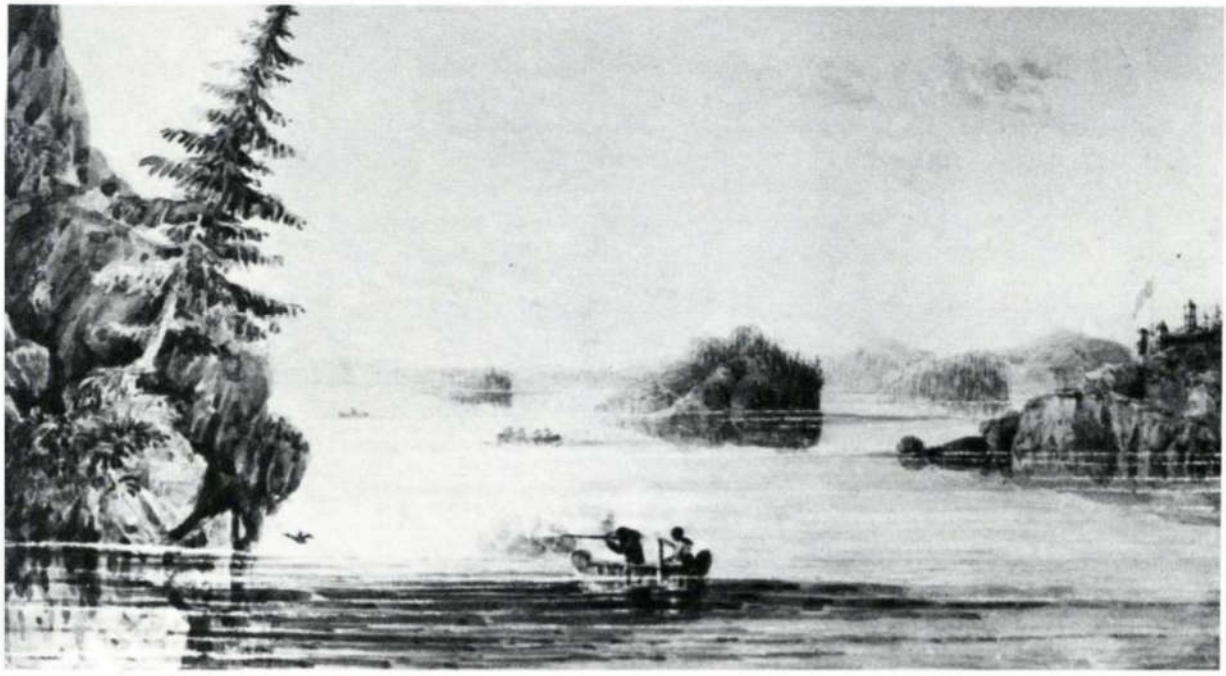
Faced with these formidable competitors the Hudson's Bay Company cut a sluggish figure. All too often its servants felt themselves the poor relations of the fur trade—as Turnor wrote in a passage which combined envy at the life of a North Wester with criticism of the careless extravagance of the employers: '. . . they give Men which never saw an Indian One Hundred Pounds Pr. Annum, his Feather Bed carried in the Canoe, his Tent which is exceeding good, pitched for him, his Bed made and he and his girl carried in and out of the Canoe and when in the Canoe [he] never touches a Paddle unless for his own pleasure . . .' At the Bottom of the Bay the Hudson's Bay men showed spirit and determination as they pushed inland posts down towards the Great Lakes; but away to the northwest, in the *Grand Nord*, the Company was slower to respond to the Canadian threat. It continued the move inland which Hearne had begun in its characteristic careful, dogged way. It trained and used explorers of the highest calibre—Philip Turnor, David Thompson, Peter Fidler—to map the inland routes in a way the North Westers never did. Slowly it extended its line of posts up the Saskatchewan, often settling down cheek-by-jowl with the North West posts. Relations with the North Westers varied; often two posts co-existed amicably enough, with the masters paying mutual courtesies, and helping each other in time of trouble or danger. But there were also incidents of violence and terror which showed the reality of the competition between the two concerns. As the Company recovered from the destruction of Churchill and York by French naval forces in 1782 it built up its inland forces. By 1786 it was sure enough of its determination to meet the North Westers on their own ground to appoint William Tomison Chief at York, *to reside inland*. For the first time in the Company's history the old Bayside posts were relegated to a subordinate position. Tomison had a total of seventy-seven men at his disposal, an impressive number compared with the half-dozen reluctant inlanders Hearne had at Cumberland House only twelve years before, but still inadequate to match the Canadians.

The Company's effort was hamstrung by a lack of skilled manpower and distracted by a multiplicity of objectives. There were at least four areas of tension and competition making demands on the Company's inland servants as they moved into the interior from York. It was a sign of Canadian confidence that the North Westers were active even in the 'Muskrat Country', the immediate hinterland of York and Churchill. Joseph Colen, factor at York, worried that so many servants were being sent into the interior that before long 'we shall have Strangers settle within a Days hunt of the Factory'. Colen complained that the Company was concentrating its attention on the Saskatchewan; yet there in 1787 Tomison found himself with only forty-four men to match against 180 Canadians. If the Saskatchewan



PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA

Simon McTavish of the North West Company who became known as 'the Marquis' of the fur trade.



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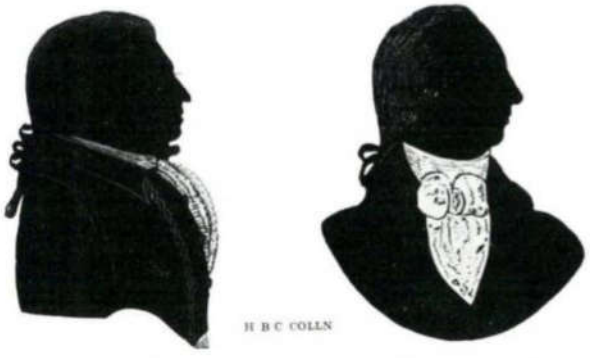
The North Westers' Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca, sketched about 1825 by George Back.

position was to be held, then there would be no men to spare for Athabasca, on the North Westers' own admission the *El Dorado* of the fur trade. It was the base from which further exploration, west and north, was being mounted, and its profits were essential to the financial stability of the North West Company. Tomison lamented in 1788: 'Had your Honours but 12 Canoes with men and goods to the Northward, these gentry would be ruined, as that quarter holds them up'.

Trade at Churchill was also affected as the Canadians moved over the watershed from Saskatchewan into Athabasca, for they now lay across the routes followed by the Indians coming down to Churchill. It was not until 1791 that Company servants managed to reach Athabasca to see for themselves the resources of the region and the extent of Canadian activity. Turnor recorded with some awe of the main post of Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca that '. . . I think this the compleatest Inland House I have seen in the Country this is the Grand Magazine of the Athapiscow Country and I am informed they have a sufficient quantity of Trading Goods in this Country for at least two years to come'. Attempts by David Thompson, Malchom Ross and even ocean-going ships to find a direct trade route from York or Churchill across to Athabasca failed. Although Ross was appointed 'Master to the Northward' in 1793 it was a sign of intention rather than achievement. Ross never discovered the direct trade route with Athabasca he was seeking; and not until 1802 did Peter Fidler establish the Company's first post in Athabasca, at Nottingham House.



H B C COLLN

H B C Governors, remote in London, Samuel Wegg (left) 1782-99 and Sir James Winter Lake 1799-1807.

With the Company's resources already strained in attempts to match the North Westers, who as Mackenzie reached first the Arctic and then the Pacific were gaining both publicity and the ear of the British government, the French wars from 1793 onwards came as a heavy blow. European wars had always brought their own difficulties to the Hudson's Bay Company. There were problems of markets and credit, complications over convoys, and above all a shortage of manpower. The British Navy's insatiable appetite for seamen drew many Orkneymen into its service, and this hit the Company hard, for the tough Orcadians were by the later eighteenth century providing perhaps three-quarters of the Company's personnel in the Bay. During the 1795-6 season, of 132 servants sent inland from York, 119 were from the Orkneys; and the entire garrison of the Company's farthest west post at Edmonton were probably Orkneymen.

To generalize about any regional group is a hazardous business, but the Orkneymen of this period emerge from the Company's records with well-defined qualities which set them sharply apart from their Canadian counterparts in the service of the North West Company. They had a canny appreciation of the worth of their labour, and no set of men was less likely to submit to exploitation. As the Company first began to move inland the Orkneymen found their own way of showing that they were not prepared to accept the hardships of life in the interior for the same wages as they had negotiated for service at the Bayside posts. Humphrey Marten wrote home from York in 1776, '. . . your Orkney Servants are very remiss in protecting your Goods, or in making themselves acquainted with the management of a Canoe; by which means they hope to be kept at the Fort, as unfit for inland duties'. On the whole, they did not make top-class officers, though there were exceptions. William Tomison, the craggy, difficult individual who supervised the Company's inland operations for many years, and that superb traveller Malchom Ross, were both Orkneymen. They would take orders from English officers, but would not work with Englishmen otherwise, and Hearne was not the only Company factor to complain of 'their Clannish attachment to each other'. Any attempt to judge the value to the Company of Orkneymen in this crucial period must take into account the fact that they were numerically inferior to the North Westers. Despite this, they showed immense tenacity, patience and endurance. Different in type from the more dashing Canadians, they showed an ability to transfer the austere, dogged qualities which their rugged home background had helped to give them to the forests and rivers of the Canadian west. Their dour approach suited well the grim, often defensive struggle which the Hudson's Bay Company was waging in these years.

As the Hudson's Bay Company faced the dilemma of inadequate resources and uncertain objectives, its affairs betrayed the lack of firm, direct authority in North America. Nothing within the Company's organization approached the personal consultation which took place each summer between the wintering partners and the Montreal agents of the North West Company at Grand Portage (and later at Fort William). Members of the London Committee never visited the Bay; as it once admitted, it 'had no sort of Clue' about many aspects of trade in the Bay. As long as the trading posts had been spaced along the coasts of the Bay direct if distant control from London had been possible; but once the Company servants expanded inland along the bewildering network of waterways, setting up and abandoning posts almost year to year, then the disadvantages of rule from London became ever more obvious. Not all the efforts of the Company surveyors could make the London Committee familiar with the problems of terrain and competition in the way that the North West partners were. William Auld, later superintendent of the Northern Department, informed the Committee in the bluntest terms of its 'local ignorance':

> Your rivers never freeze, ours are only for a short while open . . . I intreat you to dismiss from your minds the sprucely-dressed wherryman with his plush breeches and his silver badge, nor conceive the *descent* of the solitary bargeman at London Bridge with that thro' the shallow horrors of rocky chasms as at all synonimous.

With the whole pattern of trade more fluid and shifting, the delays in decision-making which London control involved were often fatal, and errors more frequent. Even consultation between individual officers in the Bay was difficult, since inland traders came down to different Bayside posts, contacts between which were sometimes even more tenuous than communication with London. As far as York was concerned, Tomison wielded a general

Prince of Wales's Fort, Churchill, in 1777 before the French attack, from a sketch by Samuel Hearne.

superintendence over the inland posts, but he held little of the power and status of George Simpson in a later period. Local considerations and jealousies often predominated, and examples of the harmful effects of these are not hard to find. On the Upper Assiniboine in the mid nineties, where the Company had struck one of its most telling blows against the North Westers by cutting across their transportation routes, the London Committee discovered that its Bay factors had established two posts within fifteen miles of each other, one supplied and directed from York, the other from Albany.

In short, the Hudson's Bay Company showed deficiencies of organization, direction and resources which made it unable to mount any kind of decisive challenge to the North West Company. What Douglas MacKay once called 'a certain toughness of fibre' showed itself as the Company clung tenaciously to its trade, and made valiant efforts to keep pace with the movements of its rivals. Edmonton House, established on the Upper Saskatchewan in 1795, was a full four hundred miles (in a direct line) beyond Cumberland House; Acton House, set up in 1799 on the North Saskatchewan, was on the fringe of the Rocky Mountains. 1797 saw the introduction of boats on the Saskatchewan ('York boats', to use the name given them by a later generation). Flat-bottomed, with the high pointed bow and stern of the Orkney fishing craft, the inland boats were to prove themselves more capacious, reliable and efficient than the famous great

Alexander Mackenzie, who was active in developing the fur trade of the northwest.

canoes of the Canadians. In the expansion of posts, and the development of new techniques of trade and transportation, the Company had advanced further in the generation following the first tentative move inland of 1774 than in the previous hundred years of its existence. But in terms of manpower and volume it was outdistanced by its Canadian rivals. In 1800 the North West Company shipped to Britain furs valued at £144,000, the Hudson's Bay Company a mere £38,000. By 1801 its dividend had dropped to four per cent, and this was

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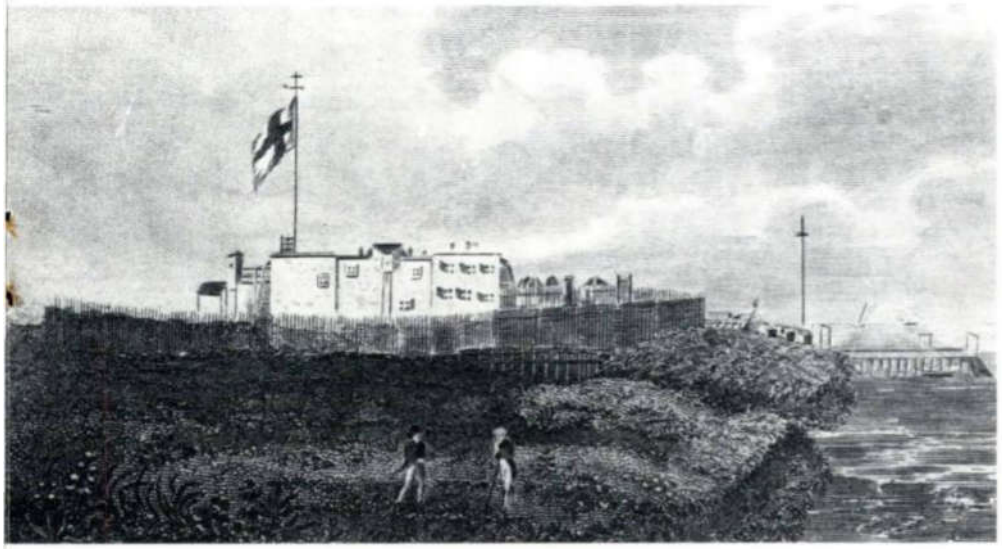
The view from Methy Portage, link with the Athabasca country, sketched in 1825 by George Back.



Picture of York Fort published 1797, possibly the fort of 1782 later rebuilt by Joseph Colen (above) who was appointed 'Resident' there in 1786.

maintained only with difficulty. Of more menace to the North West Company was a fresh rival, the 'New North West Company', or 'The XY Company' (as it soon became known from the letters used to mark its bales of goods). Violence and intimidation became the order of the day, and the Hudson's Bay men were dealt many a glancing blow in the resultant struggle. Even where rum rather than force decided the destination of the Indian trade the Hudson's Bay Company was at a disadvantage. In 1802 Tomison wrote wearily of the *largesse* being distributed by the two Canadian companies: 'I cannot think of throwing goods away for nothing as two fools in a place are enough to be laughed at by Indians'. The Hudson's Bay men, on fixed salaries (though supplemented with gratuities and premiums) and with strict orders to avoid clashes with their rivals, were buffeted about in the fierce trade war which now erupted between men whose personal careers and fortunes depended on the amount of furs wrested from the Indians. The Hudson's Bay Company formed only a third force in the trade, and it was little wonder that the two rival North West Companies disdainfully assumed that whichever of them emerged the victor could take over the London-based company without difficulty.

While inland the Company servants struggled against the odds, the Company's position in the Bay itself was challenged when in 1803 a North West Company ship reached the Bottom of the Bay, and the North Westers proceeded to establish posts which remained there unhindered until the decision to withdraw them came in 1807. Linked with this 'invasion' was a series of repeated attempts in London to gain control of the Company, particularly after the union of the two North West Companies in 1804. The main prize at stake was the Hudson Bay route. Control of this would allow the North Westers to avoid the heavy customs duties paid on furs shipped via Quebec, and would give them a shorter way to the west. As they pushed across the Rockies and onto the Pacific slope, the length and difficulty of the river routes from Montreal became an increasing worry. As Mackenzie pointed out, it was 2,750 miles from Montreal to Athabasca, the jumping-off point for the far northwest; and this simple fact of geography hardened his conviction that amalgamation between the Canadian traders and the Hudson's Bay Company was essential.

In wartime England and in North America Company morale drooped. Many of the richest fur areas were being trapped bare in the strenuous competition for skins, and although the Company managed to keep up the number of furs exported from the Bay the costs involved increased from year to year. The Company had to face the unpalatable fact that the number of men at the inland posts was now decided, not so much by trading requirements as by the necessity of defence against the North Westers. The pressure on the Company—in the Bay, at the inland posts, and in London—had all the marks of a calculated campaign, the suspected objectives of which were summarized later by Selkirk when he wrote: '. . . there is reason to believe not only that a systematic plan was formed for driving their traders out of all the valuable beaver countries, but that hopes were entertained of reducing that Company to so low an ebb, as in time to induce them to make over their chartered rights to their commercial rivals'. In 1809 the Company could not pay a dividend; its trade was being financed on credit, with Committee members often having to provide ready cash; and it had a heavy overdraft of £50,000 at the bank. With unsold furs piling up in the warehouses there was gloomy talk of a temporary withdrawal from the fur trade. The Company was confronted with its severest crisis since 1749, and this time its opponents were more formidable than Dobbs and his associates. ◆

Andrew Wedderburn

VII
THE RED RIVER AFFAIR

John Halkett

THE FIRST SIGNS of revived determination by the Hudson's Bay Company to fight back against the steady pressure being exerted by the North Westers came within the London Committee, where important changes of personnel brought a new spirit and firmer objectives to the management of the Company's business. At the end of 1809 Andrew Wedderburn (better known from 1814 onwards as Colvile) joined the Committee, and was soon followed by his brother-in-law John Halkett. In place of the defeatist scheme of withdrawal from the fur trade Colvile persuaded the Committee to adopt his Retrenching or New System—a comprehensive plan of reorganization aimed at encouraging efficiency, economy, and incentive. On the administrative level the area of the Company's trade in North America was divided into two Departments, Northern and Southern, themselves divided into Districts, each containing individual posts. The Northern Department consisted of the Districts of York, Churchill, Saskatchewan, and Winnipeg; the Southern of Albany, Moose, and Eastmain. Accompanying this more precise chain of command came increased flexibility in the handling of the trade. Masters of posts were allowed to fix their own standard of trade with the Indians—no longer need they struggle to observe 'with a kind of religious veneration' (as Selkirk once complained) a standard decided in London—and they were to share in the Company's profits. This move towards reliance on individual initiative and responsibility would, it was hoped, stiffen the attitude of the Hudson's Bay men towards the Canadian opposition. Although the circular of 1810 explaining these changes frowned on unnecessary violence, it was sharply critical of the 'abject submission' too often shown by Company servants in the past, and advocated instead a 'determined firmness'.

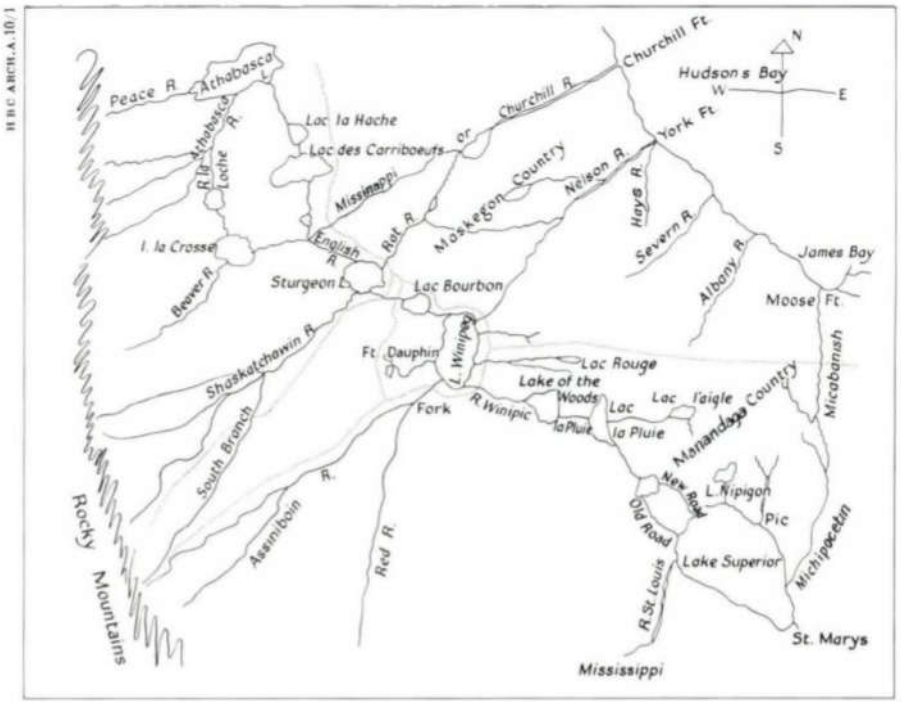
That the Committee was anxious not to precipitate an open conflict with the North West Company was shown by its cautious reaction to the scheme put before it in the winter of 1809-10 by a former North Wester, that redoubtable if erratic personality, Colin Robertson, who proposed an immediate onslaught on the North West Company's position in Athabasca. Robertson's plan rested on the two arguments, hard to dispute, that the beaver of Athabasca was of vital importance to the North West Company, and that the Hudson's Bay Company's previous efforts in that region had been of a derisory weakness. Robertson was forthright and caustic:

> This Country is the richest in Furs that has as yet been discovered, and lies so contiguous to one of your principal Factories, say Churchill, that it can be established from there at one third of the expence which it costs the North West Company . . . the Canada Merchant performs a voyage of four months to purchase Beaver at the threshold of your doors . . .

Although the Committee was wary of Robertson's scheme, with its proposal to enlist scores of Canadian *voyageurs* for the venture, its reply implied postponement rather than rejection: '. . . we shall be more likely to succeed in a contest in Athabasca, when the home territory of the Company is fully occupied, by numerous and powerful establishments, conducted by active servants, whose interests are assimilated with those of the Company'.

The Committee was the less inclined to take up Robertson's proposal at this stage since it was deeply involved in an even more ambitious project—the establishment of a settlement colony at Red River. The third member of the triumvirate which dominated the Company's affairs in this period was Thomas Douglas, fifth Earl of Selkirk, for long an enthusiastic advocate of planned emigration from the distressed areas of Ireland and Scotland. As early as 1802 he had suggested the possibility of a colony in the fertile valley of the Red River, and though his attention was then diverted to other areas of North America outside the bounds of the Company's Charter, in 1808 and 1809 he was busy buying (at inflated prices) the depressed Hudson's Bay stock. By 1810 he was in a position to put a formal proposition to the Company which dovetailed neatly with the 'Retrenching System' being introduced by his brother-in-law Colvile. Halkett and Colvile, both shrewd businessmen, had been dismayed by the cost of sending out provisions from England to the Company posts; but if a colony was established at Red River then, as the London Committee later explained to the Colonial Office, 'the Company expected that they would obtain a certain supply of

Lord Selkirk



Nor'Westers map of proposed partition, 1811, redrawn from original; H B C to be north of dotted line except for tract to the South Saskatchewan.

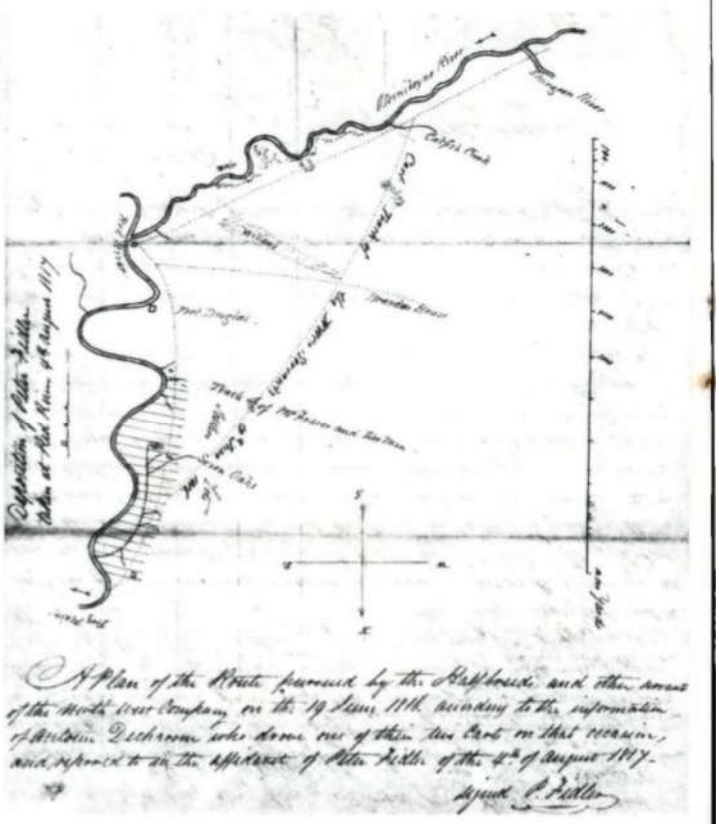
provisions at a moderate price'. In 1811, despite belated efforts by Selkirk's onetime ally, Alexander Mackenzie, and other North West partners, to buy up Company stock and block the Red River scheme, the Hudson's Bay Company granted Selkirk in fee simple for the nominal sum of ten shillings a huge tract of 116,000 square miles of land in the upper Winnipeg basin. Stretching in a north-south direction from Lake Winnipeg to the height of land between the Red River and Mississippi drainage basins, and east-west from within 50 miles of Grand Portage almost to the sources of the Assiniboine and Qu'Appelle rivers, the area was to be known as Assiniboia, or Red River Colony. (See map, *Beaver* Spring 1970, p.12.)

Neither the idea of a settlement colony nor of agricultural development within the Company's territory was altogether new. Since its early days the Company had clung to the hope that its posts would grow their own crops, and thus avoid the annual necessity of importing expensive European provisions. A prominent feature of Dobbs's campaign against the Company had been the insistence of the feasibility of large-scale settlement in the southerly part of the Company's domains. For years before the approval of Selkirk's scheme there had been a movement within the Company to establish a settlement at Red River for time-expired servants, many of whom with their native-born families and long experience of North American life, had no desire to return to the British Isles. There, in an era of increasing industrialization and land dispossession, a population explosion had prompted both private individuals and government departments to consider once more the possibilities of organized emigration.

But Selkirk's scheme could not be divorced from the fur trade, and here lay one of the sources of the tension and violence of the next decade. Both the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company were faced with fast-rising costs as a result of their mutual competition and the increase in posts and servants which accompanied their lengthening lines of communication. The North Westers, with their long haul from the St Lawrence to the fur regions of the west, and their lavish establishments of Canadian, Indian and Métis employees (often with large families), were the more affected by the spiralling expenses of the trade. Again, though both companies were heavily dependent on the buffalo meat of the plains for provisions, it was the North West Company with its large number of posts (seventy-eight according to David Thompson's map of 1814) and massed canoe brigades which was the more vulnerable to any threat to its supplies.

It was precisely this threat which Selkirk's proposed colony posed, for Assiniboia was the main source of buffalo pemmican for the North West Company. Across the plains of Assiniboia and Qu'Appelle the buffalo were hunted down by the Indians and the Métis who worked for the company. After the women had dressed, dried, and pounded it, the meat was mixed with grease and stowed in 90-lb bags of buffalo hide to form the staple food of the brigades and the essential reserve at the forest posts. In brief, the establishment of an agricultural colony at Red River held ominous implications for the North West Company, already over-strained, and feeling almost for the first time the pinch of competition from its smaller rival. Nor could it ignore the rumours that, concurrent with Selkirk's scheme, and perhaps linked with it, the Hudson's Bay Company was contemplating a push into the very heart of its trade in Athabasca. Equally disconcerting was the firm rejection by the London Committee in 1811 of the North West Company's partition proposal which, as the accompanying sketch map shows, would

Chief Factor Colin Robertson.



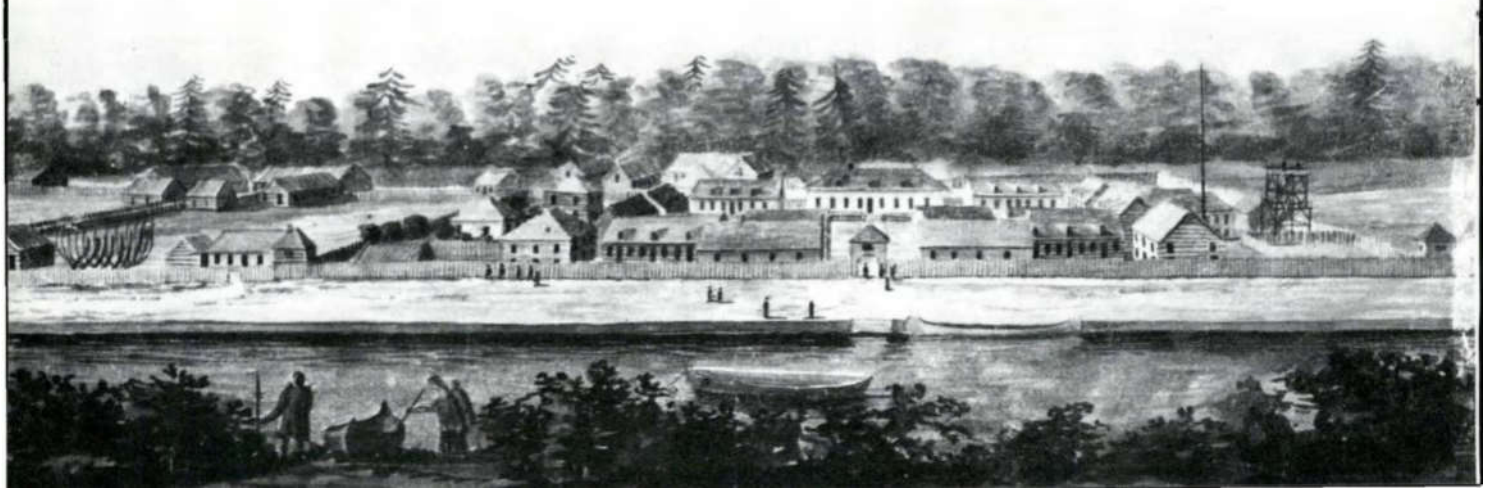
Peter Fidler's map of Red River, 1817, relating to the massacre of settlers the previous year at Seven Oaks.

have excluded the Hudson's Bay Company from Athabasca, the North Saskatchewan region, and the Rockies (even now being crossed by the Hudson's Bay trader, Joseph Howse).

Against this unpromising background, the North Westers' response to Selkirk's scheme was entirely predictable. They tried to wreck it: in the General Court of the Hudson's Bay Company, in Scotland, where Selkirk's agents were enlisting the first settlers, and before long at Red River itself. As Simon McGillivray wrote in April 1812 from Scotland to the wintering partners in Canada of Selkirk and his project, '. . . *he must be driven to abandon it*, for his success would strike at the very existence of the trade'. It is true that Selkirk was granted an absolute proprietorship over the area of his grant, but the connections between the colony and the Company were unmistakable if somewhat indeterminate. The settlement was to provide the Hudson's Bay Company with two hundred servants annually; the first recruits for Red River all signed for service with the Company (in order to bring them under some form of discipline); the colony's first governor, Miles Macdonell, was given a commission by the Company. The distinction between colony and Company was a fine one, and not one which the North Westers could be expected to comprehend or accept.

The potentialities for conflict were glimpsed when Macdonell and the first settlers reached Red River in September 1812 and picked as the centre of the settlement Point Douglas on the west bank, only a mile or so away from the North West Company post at Fort Gibraltar. Although at first relations between the North Westers and the settlers were amicable enough, the dangers of the situation became plainer month by month as more settlers arrived with interests clearly at variance with those of the fur traders. Hostility was not confined to the North Westers. Several Hudson's Bay factors were far from enthusiastic about the new settlement, and William Auld at York—the usual disembarkation point of the Red River immigrants—at times gave the impression of

Fort William c. 1812, the great entrepôt of the North West Company.



H BC COLLN.

The Red River and Fort Douglas, in distance, in a watercolour c. 1822 by Peter Rindisbacher.

attempting to sabotage the whole of Selkirk's work. The suspicions of the North Westers about the new venture were confirmed when Macdonell in January 1814 prohibited the export of provisions from Assiniboia, and followed this with the seizure of pemmican at the North West Company post at La Souris. The fact that some of the confiscated pemmican was stored at a nearby Hudson's Bay Company post did nothing to calm North Wester tempers, and although the 'Pemmican War' ended in a negotiated settlement, the vulnerability of the North Westers' position had been revealed. The weakness of their legal standing in the face of a Company which through its Charter claimed ownership of the soil was further exposed when Macdonell served formal notice to quit on the North West Company posts; and that this was a legal device to protect Selkirk's title to the territory rather than a serious threat of expulsion was not likely to cushion the shock to traders who had long dominated the region.

As tension grew the North Westers embarked on a campaign of deliberate harassment against the little settlements along the banks of the Red River, and they found a strong if unpredictable ally in the Métis. Many of these had served the company as *voyageurs*, and now made their living by supplying the brigades with pemmican. Loyalty to the North West Company was as instinctive as hostility towards the Englishmen and Orkneymen of the Hudson's Bay Company. Spirited and restless, with a unity forged in the excitement of the buffalo hunt and in the mounting conviction that through their Indian mothers they held a claim to the soil, the Métis formed a horsed, paramilitary force which watched with increasing resentment the actions of Macdonell. His prohibition of the running of buffalo by horsemen near the settlement because it drove the stampeding herds out of the reach of the colonists and Indians hunting them on foot was reasonable enough, but to the Métis it appeared as an encroachment on their rights, a threat to their very way of life.

The menace of the Métis, and the war of intimidation and innuendo waged by the North Westers, had a demoralizing effect on the settlers. In the summer of 1815 Macdonell, in a state of high nervous agitation, surrendered himself at Fort Gibraltar, and most of the settlers decided to abandon the colony. Those who remained found the Métis burning their crops and huts, and the colony was saved only by the chance meeting of the fleeing settlers with Colin Robertson and an Athabasca brigade at Lake Winnipeg. Robertson persuaded the settlers to return to Red River and stayed there himself for the winter. His appearance marked the acceptance by the Hudson's Bay Company of his plan to launch a determined attack on the North Westers' trade in Athabasca. The London Committee was helped in its decision by a recent analysis of its trade which revealed the unexpected information that the inland stations, facing keen competition, were more profitable than the sheltered posts at or near the Bayside. Opposition apparently provided a stimulus rather than a deterrent, and this discovery helped the Company to brace itself for

Red River Settlement in 1817, from a sketch believed to be by Lord Selkirk. PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA

the inevitable clash with the North Westers which would follow its entry into Athabasca. Financially, the Company was in better shape to mount such a venture than it had been in 1809/10, for fur sales had recovered in the last years of the Napoleonic Wars, and more money was available for men and wages than in the days of the Retrenching System. Robertson found his men for the expedition among the Canadian *voyageurs* in Montreal during the winter of 1814-15, and his attempt to disguise his real objective by talk of recruitment for Red River was to harden North Wester feeling against the colony. In the privacy of his diary Robertson was quite frank about the use he was making of the settlement, with his gleeful comments on the North Westers 'who view that Colony with a jealous Eye; indeed they have cause to do so, for the plan I am now executing with the assistance of that establishment bids fair for the downfall of the most tyrannical system of commerce that ever existed'. Further evidence of the links between colony and Company came with the appointment in 1815 of Robert Semple as Governor of Rupert's Land, wielding authority over Red River, and the Northern and Southern Departments—a logical move intended to remedy some of the difficulties arising from the internal reorganizations which had taken place between 1810 and 1814, but one which seemed to tie the colony yet more tightly to the Company.

At Red River Robertson entrusted the task of taking the brigade into Athabasca to another former North Wester, John Clarke, while he continued his energetic harrying of the North Westers around the settlement. His valuable private journal reveals much of the personality of the man—imaginative, acid, partisan. 'Full of silly boasting and Egotism' (as Simpson later put it) he may have been, but he stood in sharp contrast with many of the older Hudson's Bay officers whose 'unmerited sufferings and passive forbearance', Robertson wrote, had allowed the North Westers to ride roughshod over them. Their 'slow jog-trot manner' compared ill with the 'Glittering Pomposity' with which the North Westers impressed the Indians and Métis. Robertson's diary entries breathe defiance of the North Westers and all their works; 'Opposition as these men understand it' was their constant theme. But 1816, which began full of promise for the colony and the Company's trade, brought tragedy and death on a scale unprecedented in the fur trade, where even the sternest competition and most violent intimidation had stopped short of killings on any scale. In Athabasca John Clarke, recklessly short of provisions, was faced with the hostility of the dominant North Westers, and lost sixteen men through starvation. At Red River twenty-two settlers, including Governor Robert Semple, were shot down and hacked to pieces in an attack of savage ferocity by the Métis in June; and within three days the surviving settlers had once more abandoned the colony. The events of 1816 gave a new edge to the rivalry between the two companies, and set in motion a train of events which was to end only in a complete remodelling of the Canadian fur trade.

The first effect of the massacre at Seven Oaks was to bring down a heavy retaliation onto the heads of the North Westers. Selkirk, having asked in vain for British military protection for the settlement, was on his way to Red River with a force of discharged Swiss and German soldiers from the de Meuron Regiment when he heard the news. He had spent the winter of 1815-16 in Montreal, where his negotiations on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company with the North West Company had broken down in the face of the mistrust shown by both sides. Selkirk's *Sketch of the British Fur Trade in North America, with Observations on the Northwest Company of Montreal,*

completed during the winter, set out his views on the North Westers as unscrupulous men who perverted justice for their own ends, and relied on bluster and violence to gain commercial success. Hurrying on to the North Westers' headquarters at Fort William, Selkirk and his private army of de Meurons seized the fort and arrested several of the partners. At the fort Selkirk found evidence implicating the North Westers in the massacre at Red River, and this made him more than ever determined to strike at their trade and prestige. In 1817 he reached Red River, regained Fort Douglas and restored the settlement. Despite Colonial Office disapproval of his counter-violence, and the damaging nature of the subsequent legal proceedings in which he became enmeshed, Selkirk had redressed the balance. It was true, as Robertson wrote, that his obsession with colonization had been 'prosecuted with an ardour which has ruined his constitution, and with an expense I fear which will be felt by his heirs'; but his actions had secured the safety of the infant colony. What was more, by his fierce determination to use North Wester methods against their originators, Selkirk had fatally damaged their standing with the Indians and Métis. In Robertson's exultant words, Selkirk's onslaught 'completely laid the axe at the root of the North West influence and jurisdiction in this part of the country'.

The same vigour was shown by Robertson himself as he turned once more to Athabasca after his arrest and acquittal in Upper Canada. John Clarke had returned to the scene of his ordeal of the winter of 1815-16, and had borne the full brunt of North Wester opposition. Arrested three times, he yet managed to keep in existence the Company's foothold in Athabasca until reinforcements

A Red River Métis drawn by Henri Julien in the seventies.

ST BONIFACE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, PHOTO IRENE LANE

B.C. ARCHIVES

Buffalo hunting, sketched by H. J. Warre in the 1840s, was vital for the supply of pemmican.

arrived. These came in 1818 when Robertson took an imposing force of more than 180 officers and men with twenty-seven canoes. The Hudson's Bay Company, reported one of its antagonists, had appeared 'in overwhelming force'; it was a far cry from the days when expansion had to be justified by profits, and an expedition of a dozen men was regarded as an ambitious venture. Although Robertson was arrested—by now a routine fate for any fur trader worth his salt—the expedition opened up damaging gaps in the North Westers' apparently impregnable position in Athabasca. Over-extended as they were, they could not afford to meet serious competition in this rich fur area. It was Robertson once again who sensed the North Westers' weakness and the importance of the Athabasca struggle: '. . . this was not an ordinary contest . . . a diminution of their returns, and augmentation to their expenses, even with a small increase of trade to the Hudsons Bay Co., must have a powerful effect in bringing the contest to a favourable termination'.

Under strain the traditional alliance within the North West Company between the wintering partners and the Montreal agents was beginning to disintegrate. There had always been an underlying tension between those who endured the hardships of the trade and those who reaped most of its profits; but the events of the past few years led to mutual recriminations on a scale hitherto unknown. The winterers were angered at the way in which Robertson's first Athabasca expedition had slipped unhindered out of Montreal, while among both groups there were men, hardened in fur trade rivalry, who were uneasy about the war on settler families, and concerned about the increasing violence and cost of the competition for furs. There was no immediate end in sight to the feud—as Lady Selkirk wrote to her husband, 'The enemy has got a bruise but he is not crushed yet'—but Selkirk and Robertson, with their ambitious schemes and determined opposition to the North Westers, had brought a new and sterner element of competition into the ranks of the Hudson's Bay Company. ◆

REX WOODS FOR HBC

Travelling west from Fort William in 1821 Nicholas Garry was accompanied by the Nor'Wester, Simon McGillivray (with glasses); here they lunch by falls on the Winnipeg River.

VIII COALITION

THE EVENTS leading to the juncture of the rival companies in 1821 were shaped in London rather than North America, where conflict continued in the field at a time when the managerial sides in both concerns were showing signs of war-weariness, and moving towards a settlement. The most ominous development as far as the North West Company was concerned was a widening of the split between the Montreal agents and the wintering partners. From his cell at Fort Chipewyan during the winter of 1818-19 Colin Robertson had noted with malicious delight that 'The majority of the wintering partners were not on the best terms with the agents, whom they considered the authors of their misfortunes'. A further blow to the North Westers' organization and prestige came in the summer of 1819, when the new Governor of Rupert's Land, William Williams, ambushed the wintering partners at the Grand Rapid of the Saskatchewan. These arrests by a force armed with cannon as well as small arms seemed to presage an intensification of the private war between the companies, and the episode did nothing to improve North Wester morale. The annual meeting between agents and wintering partners at Fort William in 1820 made the usual arrangements to get the brigades away to Athabasca, but reached no decision on the future of the Company. Although their partnership agreement with the agents was due to expire in 1822, the wintering partners showed little disposition to sign a new one, and instead were hinting at an independent approach to the Hudson's Bay Company.

As the North Westers met and argued at Fort William, a Hudson's Bay Company canoe passed by bearing on board the jaunty figure of the Company's latest appointment to Athabasca, George Simpson. The last stages of the Athabasca campaign revealed the potentialities of this new recruit. Resourceful and self-confident, Simpson saw the struggle in terms of commercial dominance and

efficiency rather than the mock soldiering in which Williams indulged. As he told John Clarke, the excitable hero and victim of many a fur-trade skirmish, 'The North West Company are not to be put down by Prize fighting, but by persevering industry . . .' Simpson never had the opportunity to prove his point, for his first winter in Athabasca coincided with the crucial negotiations in London which led to the agreement of March 1821.

The negotiations were not a simple, bilateral affair. The North West Company was represented in London by separate delegations: John McLoughlin and Angus Bethune acting for eighteen of the wintering partners, and Edward Ellice and William McGillivray representing the agents. Ellice, London agent for the North West Company, and an M.P. with influence at the Colonial Office, played an important if somewhat obscure mediatory role—at the behest of the Colonial Secretary, Bathurst, if Ellice's later recollections are to be trusted. Certainly the seriousness of the situation in the Canadian west had forced itself on the attention of the government. The publication in 1819 of a Blue Book of *Papers relating to the Red River Settlement 1815-1819* had given Members of Parliament a detailed if sobering account of the events of that troubled settlement, and though there is no evidence that the government was much concerned with the rights and wrongs of this distant trade war, it was by 1820 clearly anxious to see some sort of compromise agreement. This was easier to reach than it might otherwise have been because of the death of Selkirk in April 1820, and the financial weaknesses of both companies. The North West Company was now suffering from the casual flexibility of structure which had once been its strength. Since it distributed its profits annually, in these hard times it had no reserve fund to call on, and its financial losses had a direct impact on the wintering partners. Although the Hudson's Bay Company did not show such acute signs of distress, its overdraft at the Bank of England stood at its maximum permitted level of £75,000, and the London Committee was uneasily aware of the continuing cost of the extravagant competition in the fur trade. Neither side had enough confidence in its own strength to want to prolong the struggle. The Hudson's Bay Company was far from convinced that it was winning the day in Athabasca; the North West Company was doubtful whether it could survive its internal dissensions for many more months.

A complex and often urgent set of pressures, then, brought agreement in 1821 where there had been stalemate and failure in previous negotiations. To argue which side 'won' is a profitless task, since the fortunes of the joint concern after the coalition were determined as much by the personalities and events of the new era as by the framework of the 1821 settlement. The great merit of the agreement—and for this Colvile and the Deputy Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, John Henry Pelly, probably deserve most credit—was that it embraced the most important figures and influences within both companies. Even those traders with a grim record of violence such as Samuel Black and Peter Skene Ogden, who were deliberately excluded from the new trade at first, were soon readmitted and served the reorganized Hudson's Bay Company well. Colvile and Pelly resisted the temptation to limit concessions to one or other of the rival forces jostling for position within the North West Company, and instead aimed at a comprehensive settlement which would be permanent and productive.

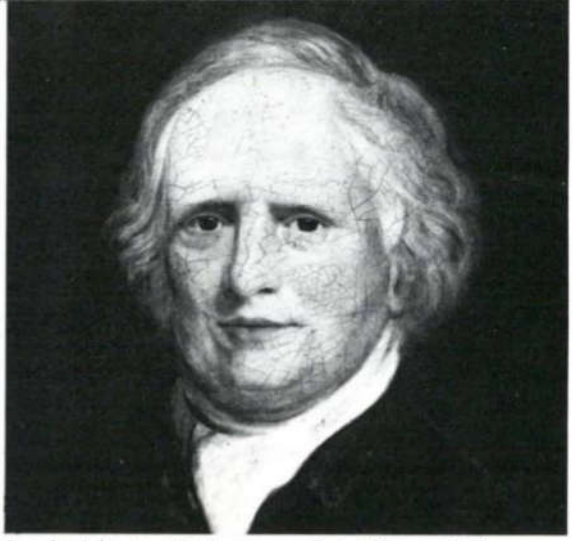
The negotiations concluded in March 1821 stipulated that from June of that year a twenty-one year agreement would be in force placing the trade of both companies in the hands of a remodelled Hudson's Bay Company. A Royal Licence later in the year granted the new concern a monopoly, also for twenty-one years, of the fur trade of British North America except for the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, and Rupert's Land (in the latter the Hudson's Bay Company was held to retain exclusive trade rights by virtue of its Charter). As a result of these negotiations the Hudson's Bay Company was to dominate an area of more than three million square miles—in effect modern Canada from Ontario to the Pacific. The annual profits of the new undertaking were to be divided into one hundred shares: twenty to the Hudson's Bay Company proprietors, twenty to the North West Company proprietors, forty to the traders in the field, and the remaining twenty split between Selkirk's heirs, Simon McGillivray and Edward Ellice (to compensate for the loss of their London agency), and a reserve fund. The

John Halkett, second member of the London Committee to visit Rupert's Land, in 1822 drew this watercolour of a canot de maitre carrying two Company officers. H BC COLLN.

London Committee was to remain in existence, but was to be advised by a board of four—Colvile and Nicholas Garry for the Hudson's Bay Company, Simon McGillivray and Ellice for the North West Company. William McGillivray strove to put on the best face he could about the new situation and pointed out that fifty-five of the shares in the new concern were held by North Westers; but this estimate ignored the disunity so evident in the Canadian ranks before coalition, and the increasing difficulties which the Montreal agents were now facing. By 1824 the firm of McGillivrays, Thain and Co. virtually disintegrated with the death of William McGillivray, the illness of Thomas Thain, and the falling into disuse of the Montreal trade routes to the west. In a reshaping of the 1821 agreement the North West agents became shareholders of the Hudson's Bay Company with no special privileges, and the joint advisory board was dissolved. Of the old North West agents only Ellice found a place on the London Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company which through all these changes had retained its London organization, its Charter and its rights to the soil of Rupert's Land.

This is not to say that the new Hudson's Bay Company was simply an enlarged version of the old; in and after 1821 the North Westers contributed much to it in method as well as personnel. The term coalition is not a misnomer. Two of the most distinctive features of the North West Company were recognized and approved in the 1821 settlement: the formal financial partnership of the traders, and the regular participation of these partners in the management of the trade. The Deed Poll of 1821 named those traders from among the old wintering partners of the North West Company and the field officers of the Hudson's Bay Company who were to be given the status of partners (and a share in 40 per cent of the profits of the trade). Two ranks were designated: chief factors, of whom there were to be twenty-five, and chief traders, whose number was fixed at twenty-eight. Of the total of fifty-three officers or 'commissioned gentlemen', thirty-two were North Westers. As in the old North West Company the financial relationship between the trader in the field, and the directors and shareholders, was given a legal basis. On the management side the same principle was introduced. In each of the two regional departments between which the trade was divided the chief factors were to meet once a year to determine policy, promotions and so on. The North West Company had long known such an arrangement with its annual meetings at Fort William; and since the reorganizations of 1810-14 the Hudson's Bay Company had been experimenting with the use of a general council to support its governor in the field.

In North America the Company faced massive problems. It inherited from the North West Company the fur trading areas west of the Rockies with their American and Russian competition and (soon) the entanglements of great-power diplomacy. In eastern Canada its acquisition of a trading area centred on Montreal brought it into conflict with private Canadian traders as well as with the Americans. Accompanying this geographical expansion were urgent problems of internal policy and staffing. The sudden end of rivalry between the two companies made nonsense of the trading structures which they had built up. There were surplus posts and personnel —the McGillivrays estimated that the joint concern had more than twice as many clerks as it needed—and overlavish trading practices. Prices paid to the Indians for their furs had risen recklessly during the competition of the previous decade, and alcohol had been traded with irresponsible generosity. The demand for furs had led to trapping at all seasons, of young as well as adult animals, and many areas were now denuded of furs. Frederick Merk summarized a depressing situation when he wrote:



H.B.C. COLL'N.

Involved in negotiations were John Henry Pelly . . .

> Rupert's Land was strewn with the wreckage of battle. There was material wreckage in the form of exhaustion of fur preserves, the duplication of trading posts, and the multiplication of equipment and men. More difficult to cope with was the psychological wreckage, mutual bitterness and hate . . . and the propensity to waste and extravagance formed by the whole fur-trading community.

A foretaste of the difficulties to come was provided by Nicholas Garry, committee member of the Hudson's Bay Company, and soon to be Deputy Governor, who was sent to Canada in 1821 (on the grounds, he wryly explained, that he was 'the only single man in the Direction'). Garry was to explain the new situation to the men in the field, and represent the Hudson's Bay Company in the preliminary rearrangements which coalition called for. His private diary is more informative on insect pests than fur trade problems, but occasionally business intrudes. If a victory had been won in 1821 it was that of the Hudson Bay over the St Lawrence route to the northwest, and the implications of this emerge plainly in Garry's journal. Though his travelling companion Simon McGillivray dominated the discussions on the reallocation of posts among the wintering partners and Hudson's Bay men, Garry's notes show that the strategic direction of the fur trade had unmistakably shifted to Hudson Bay and London. The great North Wester depot and adminis-

PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA

. . . Edward Ellice . . .

PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA

. . . William McGillivray.

trative centre at Fort William was to be run down, while Rainy Lake, the old Canadian supply base for Athabasca, 'will now become a mere trading Post as these Athapascans will be supplied from York Fort'. And from York the goods would be taken inland in boats rather than canoes, a change from North Wester practice which explains another of Garry's diary entries, 'The Canadians in the Service of the Hudson Bay Company exceeding so much the Number which will be required, it will be expedient not to renew the Engagements of such Men whose Time is expired . . .' At Bas de la Rivière Garry noted with disapproval more evidence of the casual days of North West Company rule: '. . . there were 50 Women and Children living at the Expense of the Company. This is an immense Expense and Some Steps should be taken to avoid it'. Clearly the process of amalgamation and rationalization would involve in the actual trading areas awkward human problems and resentment however skilfully managed.

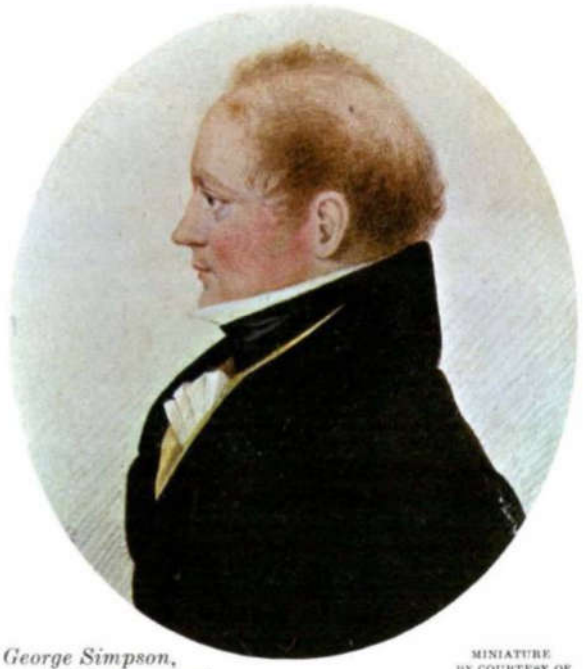
Although Garry performed a useful educational task in the field, took back to England first-hand information for the Committee to digest, and was followed the next year by another director, Halkett, the key figure in the difficult period after coalition was George Simpson. His first comment on news of the coalition as he came out of Athabasca after his successful winter season of 1820-1 was 'disappointment that instead of a junction our Opponents have not been beaten out of the Field'; but this fiery reaction was soon replaced by a quick awareness of the opportunities which the new organization promised. His appointment as Governor of the Northern Department in 1821 gave him authority over an area, much of it ravaged by competition, stretching from Hudson Bay across the Rockies, and from the American border to the Arctic. Simpson's comparative lack of experience in the fur trade was in some ways an advantage, for he had not incurred the personal enmities and hatreds which the feud between the two companies had brought to the northwest. Many years later a trader present at the first tense meeting of former rivals at York in October 1821 recalled the soothing role played by Simpson:

> This first social meeting of the superior officers of the coalesced concerns—73 men were present—in the great mess hall of the factory or fort, 300 feet in length with its two long narrow tables, had some peculiar features, owing to the bitter feelings of the guests who had for many years been keen trade competitors, and sometimes personal antagonists in willing combat. The 'proud Northwest bucks'—mostly Highlandmen—had been stalking about the old fort, as haughtily as had been their wont at their own former headquarters for the interior, namely, Fort William, Lake Superior, not trying to converse with the Hudson's Bayites. It was 'dollars to doughnuts'—as the saying is—whether the entertainment would be a 'feed' or a 'fight'. Fortunately the governor in chief, Mr. (afterwards Sir George) Simpson . . . was present, endeavouring by courtesy and tact to complete his work . . . The two sections of the guests, at summons of the bell, entered the great hall in silence, and kept wholly apart until the new governor moving in the throng with bows, smiles and introduction, brought about some conversation or handshaking between individuals . . .

Simpson brought to his task a combination of energy, administrative ability and capacity for reasoned judgement rare in the fur trade. Guided and directed by the London Committee, he introduced order and regularity into the disturbed, uncertain state of affairs he found in the Northern Department. The problem of surplus personnel was met by allowing senior officers to retire on generous terms, and by discharging unsatisfactory or newly-joined servants. Instead of the existing practice of paying high wages to servants on the assumption that they would be recovered through high prices for the goods, a more realistic financial system was gradually introduced, not without some friction. Here, as elsewhere, Simpson was in this early stage of his career putting into effect the decisions of the London Committee, which had already condemned the high wage and price level of the competition period: 'It is a vicious system to give high nominal wages, and look to seducing the men into extravagance, and imposing upon them, by charging an undue price for their goods as a compensation for these high wages'. In an effort to tighten discipline, fines were introduced for misconduct, though again this system was easier to outline on paper than to apply in practice. As Simpson wrote of the Canadians in the service, 'they stand more in awe of a blow than a fine'. Another balancing effort of some difficulty was required in the attempt to eliminate the trading of alcohol with the Indians,

compensating them by a more generous regular standard of trade. Simpson made some headway against a practice which offended both his sense of propriety and his business instincts, but was unable to abolish the trade in alcohol in those frontier areas where the Company still faced competition. In the vital matters of transport and communications, Simpson showed great energy if not always impeccable judgement in prospecting and recommending new routes, and pursued with especial determination the decision to replace canoes by the more economical and reliable boats wherever practical.

Apart from enforcing major policy decisions laid down in London by the notably shrewd and experienced Committee of this period, Simpson brought to the fur trade his own particular insistence on the virtues of economy and regularity. His tireless journeying across the Company's domains gave him ample opportunity to see for himself the often slipshod, haphazard methods of the old traders. He wrote of his trip of 1822-3 to Athabasca, Peace River and the Upper Saskatchewan, 'the object of this immence Journey is if possible to check abuses which nothing but my own presence can effectually stop'. It was one of Simpson's strengths that in physical endurance and toughness he could match any of his traders, and the period after coalition is studded with stories of the exploits of the stocky, purposeful figure on the trail or in encounters with recalcitrant servants. Simpson's approach was a personalized one. He moved swiftly from one area to another, investigating, probing, recommending, and sometimes dismissing. He was never at ease with a problem unless he had seen its nature for himself. Thus, the Columbia was a little-known region to the Hudson's Bay men, so it followed that as soon as Simpson had mastered the most immediate problems east of the Rockies he crossed the mountains (in 1824) to carry out his own survey of the area, regarded with intense disfavour by the profit-conscious factors of the Northern Department. In this old North West Company trading preserve a critical Simpson found, as he put it, that 'Everything appears . . . on too extended a scale *except the Trade* . . .'; and with the help of the former North Wester, John McLoughlin, he infused a new spirit of enterprise into the trade, at the same time cutting its expenses. Another region eyed with disfavour by Simpson's Northern Department Council was Red River. While the London Committee was insistent that the settlement must continue, the fur traders showed all the hostility of the old North Westers to the colony, not least when petty traders appeared and flourished there. As Peter Skene Ogden was to write, '. . . the Fur Trade and Civilisation can never blend together and experience teaches us that the former invariably gives way to the latter'. It took all Simpson's skill to persuade his Chief Factor that Red River still had potentialities as a place of retirement for old servants, a source of food supply for the fur trade, and a barrier against American encroachments.



George Simpson, the 'Little Emperor'.

MINIATURE BY COURTESY OF MRS M. PORRITT

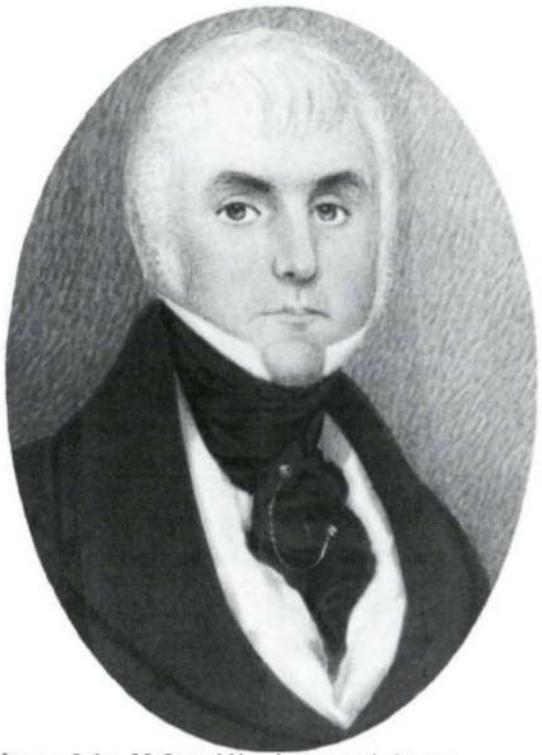
Simpson's achievements stand in sharp contrast to the difficulties encountered by his fellow-governor, William Williams, as he grappled with the smaller if no less taxing problems of the Southern Department, ruled from Moose. Whereas Simpson had managed his Council with a judicious blend of tact and firmness, exercising an increasing dominance over his chief factors, Williams was more often than not at loggerheads with his Council. His bluff attitude to men and affairs had little in common with the subtlety, even deviousness, Simpson could show in Council: 'Keep temper and do not allow yourself to be drawn into altercations with any of those who may be there; you can gain neither honour nor glory by quarrelling with them but can twist them round your finger by setting about it properly'. Farther east the trade centred on Montreal was in disarray as the firm of McGillivrays, Thain and Co. collapsed; and the London Committee, dismayed by the inability of its officers and agents in the east to show the decisiveness and grasp of affairs of its Northern Department governor, announced in 1826 that Simpson's authority was to be extended to cover the Southern Department and the Montreal-based posts. The Committee wrote to Simpson in explanation: 'We consider that you have acquired a more perfect knowledge of the Indian Trade than perhaps was ever possessed by any one Individual, or even by any body of Men who have been engaged in it'. The eulogy did scant justice to some of Simpson's predecessors, but there was no doubting one fact: a new era had opened in the fur trade, that of the 'Little Emperor'. ◆

IX SIMPSON AND McLOUGHLIN

FOR ALMOST FORTY YEARS after the coalition of 1821 the operations of the Hudson's Bay Company in North America were dominated by George Simpson. His forceful rule gave a unity of purpose and method to the fur trade which it had never known in the days of the rival companies. The Hudson's Bay Company showed a vitality in North America supported by sound management in London which confirmed that the union of the two companies had infused some of the best qualities of each into the new concern. Simpson presided over the field activities of a business corporation whose ramifications extended from the Labrador peninsula to the Pacific coast, from the Snake country to the Mackenzie River. Within his North American domain Simpson was supreme; after 1826 he faced few challenges from his councils of chief factors, for he was ready to back his judgement with a ruthless treatment of dissenters. As he told the investigating Parliamentary Committee of 1857, 'They could outvote me, but it has never been so'. This is not to say that Simpson ruled untrammelled. He was always subject to the final if remote authority of the London Committee, no mean force at this period when it included directors of the ability and experience of John Henry Pelly (Governor from 1822 to 1852), Andrew Colvile (Committee member from 1808 to 1839, and thereafter Deputy-Governor and then Governor), and Edward Ellice senior (a member of the Committee from 1824 to 1837). In a conflict of opinion the London Committee would always win, on paper at least, but such conflicts were infrequent; and though the Committee did not hesitate to demur from its overseas Governor when necessary, the relationship between them was one of mutual respect rather than tension.

Although the extent of the Company's operations was far greater after coalition than before, the well-tried principles of fur-trade management remained much the same: in the areas safe from competition an insistence on controlled trapping, a paternal attitude towards the Indians, and high profits; in the frontier regions a determination to clear the area of competition regardless of cost. As Simpson put it, '. . . it has always been a maxim with us, that the Compy. are able to pay as high

Fort Vancouver and village in 1846, a drawing by R. Covington in the H B C archives. Round the Fort are cultivated fields and orchard, beyond it the saw-mill; at the end of the wharf the salmon store, and stables near the pond.



Young John McLoughlin, from a miniature in McLoughlin House, Oregon City.

as any other party'. As before, the Company relied on its business efficiency rather than on its charter rights to obtain dominance of the trade. But outside the commercial sphere the geographical extension of the Company's activities involved it in new and delicate questions of international diplomacy and settler problems; and this was nowhere more evident than in the Columbia District.

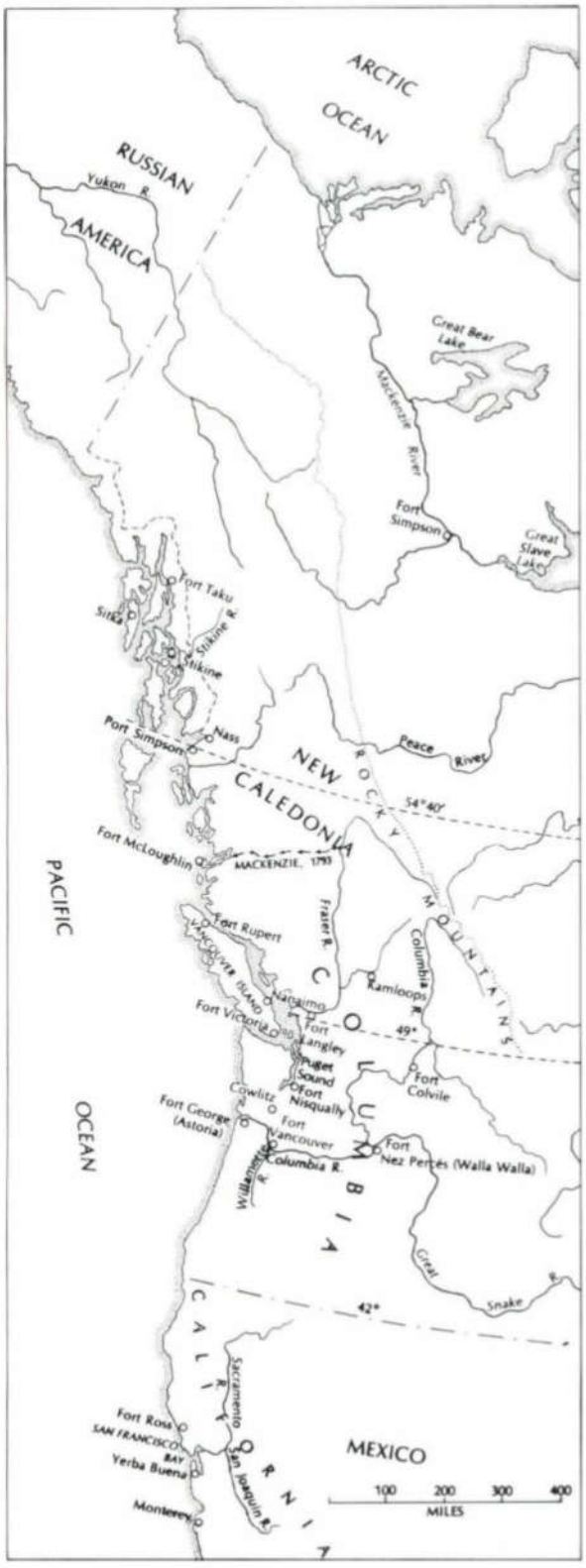
The Pacific coast provided ample proof of the difficulties which a frontier region presented. The Company was soon enmeshed in questions of trade and diplomacy with its American and Russian competitors, while away from international politics there still remained those problems of transport, Indian relations, and markets which the North West Company had never succeeded in mastering. At the time of coalition no international boundary had been defined west of the Rocky Mountains; the convention of 1818 between Britain and the United States of America which accepted the 49th parallel as the frontier across the prairies had agreed only on a ten-year truce west of the mountains. The Hudson's Bay Company inherited seven posts in the Columbia District from the North West Company, six of them south of the 49th parallel—clearly a vulnerable position in face of the expected boundary negotiations of the next few years. Further, the trade was running at a loss, and there was talk within the Company of abandoning the area altogether, though as the London Committee pointed out to Simpson in 1822, it at least protected 'the more valuable districts to the North of it', that is New Caledonia. For three years after the coalition Simpson's preoccupation with matters east of the Rockies left him little time for the Columbia, but in 1824 he decided to visit the region for himself, and prompted the appointment there as Chief Factor of John McLoughlin. The relationship between Simpson and McLoughlin was to be a critical one for the Hudson's Bay Company west of the mountains, and its deterioration into an acerbic personal feud reveals a side of Simpson's character which became increasingly noticeable as he grew older and more autocratic.

McLoughlin had served the North West Company since 1803, and had emerged in its last year as one of the most independently-minded of the wintering partners. At the coalition he was appointed Chief Factor and given charge of the Lac la Pluie District. Physically 'the Doctor' (as he was called by his colleagues in deference to his early medical training) was an imposing figure; a stern giant of a man with a mane of white hair, given on occasion to frightening outbursts of temper. He was an experienced trader with administrative ability, a genuine love of responsibility, and strong views. He left York for the Columbia in 1824 three weeks before Simpson, only to be overtaken near the Athabasca River by the Governor travelling at his usual prodigious pace. Simpson's journal entry for the day contains a memorable pen-portrait of the discomfited McLoughlin:

> He was such a figure as I should not like to meet in a dark Night in one of the bye lanes in the neighbourhood of London, dressed in Clothes that had once been fashionable, but now covered with a thousand patches of different Colors, his beard would do honor to the chin of a Grizzly Bear, his face and hands evidently Shewing that he had not lost much time at his Toilette, loaded with Arms and his own herculean dimensions forming a tout ensemble that would convey a good idea of the high way men of former Days.

McLoughlin's reaction to Simpson's abrupt arrival at his camp is unrecorded. It may well be that W. S. Wallace was right when he wrote that 'McLoughlin probably had for Simpson the almost instinctive dislike of the big man for the small man who is set over him', though in the nature of things there is no positive evidence for this. From the beginning the two men had their differences, but for some years they worked and corresponded in reasonably harmonious partnership, which perhaps had as

H B C steamer 'Otter' beached at Port Simpson; by G. S. Brodie, 1860s, courtesy Glenbow-Alberta Institute.



The Pacific Coast, based on maps of the 1830s and 1850s, with the Mexican border as it was before the treaty of 1848.

its bond of union the common devotion of both to the Columbia District. McLoughlin left it for only one furlough in the next twenty-one years. More surprising, for long the Columbia exerted a curious fascination over Simpson: 'I can scarcely account for the extraordinary interest I have taken in its affairs, the subject engrosses my attention almost to the exclusion of every other', he wrote on his first visit.

Simpson was appalled by the state in which he found the District in 1824, but captivated by its potentialities. In his thorough way he swiftly moved to put affairs on a more businesslike footing. Anticipating a boundary settlement which would exclude the Company from the area south of the Columbia, Simpson gave orders for the old North Wester post at Fort George (Astoria) to be replaced by one on the north bank of the river. This new depot for the Columbia trade, Fort Vancouver, was about seventy-five miles from the river mouth, and set in fertile agricultural country. This latter consideration was an important one to Simpson, who was pursuing with even more fervour than usual his policy of replacing expensive European provisions with local produce. Of the traders at one post in the District he grumbled, 'They may be said to have been eating Gold', and in a firm statement of policy he insisted 'It has been said that Farming is no branch of the Fur Trade but I consider that every pursuit tending to leighten the Expence of the Trade is a branch thereof . . .' The area south of the Columbia was to be regarded as a temporary sphere of Company influence and, as the London Committee put it to Simpson, it was to be trapped bare. This equivalent of a scorched-earth policy would, it was hoped, keep the American traders at bay in the Snake country to the southeast at the same time as the vessel Simpson proposed should be stationed on the coast would hinder the activities of American maritime traders. The Company's position vis-à-vis its international rivals was secured, for the time being at least, by an agreement with Russia in 1825 which gave the Company trading rights as far north as 54°40'N.—an abandonment of an earlier attempt to declare the North Pacific a Russian lake—and by a renewal in 1827 of the truce with the United States over the boundary west of the mountains.

The policies defined, McLoughlin was left to enforce them, and when Simpson returned to the Columbia in 1828-9 he was much impressed. He wrote to the London Committee from Fort Vancouver:

> Never did such a change of system, and a change of management, produce such obvious advantages in any part of the Indian country, as those which the present state of this Establishment in particular, and of the Columbia Department [sic] as a whole, at this moment exhibits.

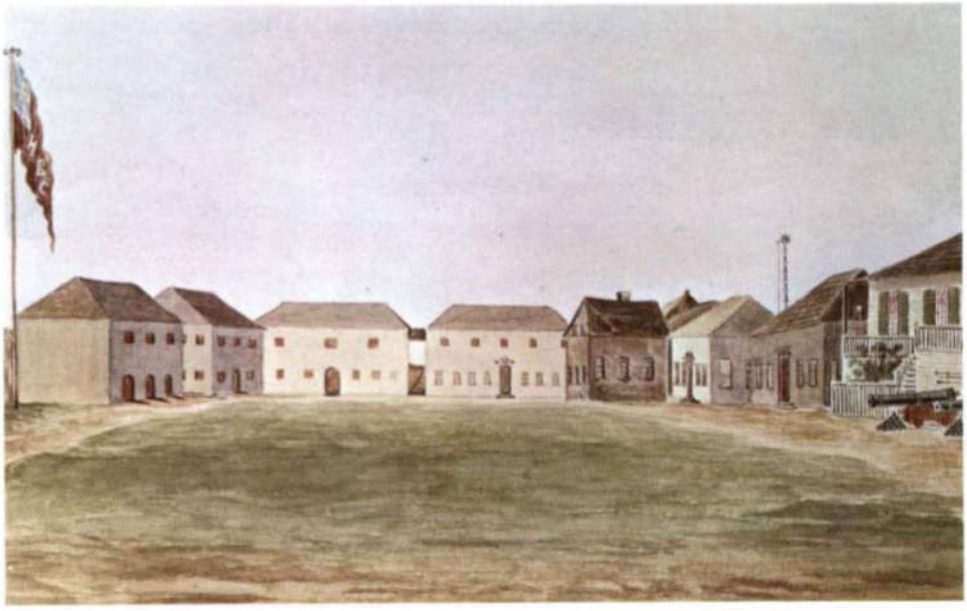
But already there were signs of storms ahead. Though the Columbia District belonged officially to the Northern Department, its distance from York, Simpson, and the annual councils far to the east gave McLoughlin a unique freedom of manoeuvre. In full agreement with the

H B C COLLN.

The S.S. 'Beaver' first steaming the Pacific in 1836, sketched by W. Ferris in her final resting place 1889, wrecked the year before near Vancouver.

Company's determination to establish a chain of posts from the Columbia River north to Alaska, he was less enthusiastic about the supporting decision to patrol the intervening stretches of coastline with Company vessels. The cost of keeping the vessels in repair, the natural dangers of coastal navigation, the possibility of Indian attacks, and the incompetence of the captains, were all matters of nagging concern to McLoughlin. The first voyage of the *Cadboro* along the coast in 1827 prompted him to complain that 'we acquired very little additional knowledge of the Trade, but we have a shocking proof of its hazardous nature and that a Vessel must be strongly manned to insure the safety of the crew'. The combination of Company posts and ships proved too much for the American maritime traders, who virtually disappeared from the coast for a time, but to McLoughlin the vessels were costly encumbrances—'Four posts when established will be kept up at less expense than one Vessel', he declared on one occasion. In 1834 he went so far as to reject the brig *Nereide* along with her captain, only to find the London Committee retaliating by sending out another sailing vessel, and the paddle steamer *Beaver*.

This famous steamer, the first to be seen in the Pacific north of San Francisco, was to become (in Dr Kaye Lamb's words) 'a veritable symbol of the differences of opinion' between McLoughlin and his superiors. Its arrival meant that McLoughlin found himself, to his disgust, saddled with no fewer than seven vessels for the coastal trade and the long haul to China or back to Europe. His opposition to coastal vessels stemmed from more than a landman's prejudice against the unpredictable behaviour of ships and their captains; behind it lay a general reluctance to follow the uncompromising attitude of Simpson and the London Committee towards commercial competitors. As long as the Company dominated the main trade of the region, McLoughlin was unconcerned about the movements of casual traders on the fringes. To insist on trading every last skin on the coast was to McLoughlin a needlessly costly and small-minded policy. There were other irritants as well. McLoughlin's uninhibited disciplinary methods did little to endear him to the London Committee; as Colvile wrote to Simpson near the end of McLoughlin's career with the Company, 'That long rope of the Doctor's is an ugly matter . . .' The Puget's Sound Agricultural Company was another cause of friction. In 1832 McLoughlin had drawn up a proposal 'for the rearing of Cattle on a large scale' by himself and other Company servants acting in a private capacity, but when the London Committee decided to introduce the



H B C COLLN.

Fort Vancouver, Columbia River, an unsigned, undated watercolour that, judging from the buildings, might date from the early 1850s. The view faces stores and shop buildings at west of enclosure; at right, with cannon in front, is the Chief Factor's house.

Fort Rupert, established in 1849 on the northern shore of Vancouver Island, drawn in May 1866 by an unknown artist. HBC COLLN.

project some years later under its official auspices as the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company. McLoughlin showed a grumpy reluctance to pursue the matter further. Simpson's confidential entry on McLoughlin in his 'Character Book' of 1832 was couched in different terms from the complimentary language Simpson was using in his public correspondence, and revealed the latent antagonism between these two formidable personalities:

> . . . Very zealous in the discharge of his public duties and a man of strict honor and integrity but a great stickler for rights and privileges and sets himself up for a righter of wrongs. Very anxious to obtain a lead among his colleagues with whom he has not much influence owing to his ungovernable violent temper and turbulent disposition, and would be a troublesome man to the Comp'y if he had sufficient influence to form and tact to manage a party, in short, would be a Radical in any Country under any Government and under any circumstances; and if he had not pacific people to deal with, would be eternally embroiled in 'affairs of honor' on the merest trifles arising I conceive from the irritability of his temper more than a quarrelsome disposition. Altogether a disagreeable man to do business with as it is impossible to go with him in all things and a difference of opinion almost amounts to a declaration of hostilities, yet a good hearted man and a pleasant companion.

McLoughlin's furlough in England in 1838-9 appeared to smooth over some of the differences of the previous years, and an agreement in 1839 with the Russian American Company offered him a new outlet for his energies in that it conceded to the Hudson's Bay Company a ten-year lease on a strip of Russian territory in the Alaskan 'panhandle'. On his return to Fort Vancouver McLoughlin drove home the advantage this agreement gave to the Company by sending James Douglas north to take over the Russian post at Stikine, and to build another post farther north still at Taku. The Company had now established a virtual monopoly of the trade from California to Alaska, but as he planned to exploit the Company's new predominance, McLoughlin reckoned without the restless realism of Simpson. In 1841 the Governor, recently knighted, arrived on the Pacific coast during his world tour, and journeyed north as far as Taku to appraise the situation for himself. On his return to Fort Vancouver Simpson told McLoughlin that the coastal trade was to be put on a different and more economical footing now that competition had disappeared. All except one of the coastal posts were to be abandoned, and the *Beaver* was to collect most of the furs brought down to the coast. This drastic reorganization was anathema to McLoughlin, and Simpson did less than justice to the Chief Factor when he wrote to London that McLoughlin opposed the new scheme 'for no other reason that I can discover, than that the measure did not originate with himself'. However stubborn McLoughlin may have been on this issue—and certainly he was reluctant to admit the necessity for reassessment of a changed situation—there was no doubting the sincerity of his opposition. His resentment against Simpson deepened when he was presented with another proposal, that the Company's administrative centre on the coast should move from the Columbia to Vancouver Island, a shift he had long resisted. Largely as a result of his exertions Fort Vancouver was the centre of a thriving agricultural area with farms, livestock, fruit cultivation, a salmon fishery, and a saw mill. Here McLoughlin enjoyed playing host to an ever-increasing number of visitors; and he was disinclined to accept banishment to the dank shores of Vancouver Island, which he had firmly categorized as 'not a place suitable to our purpose'. Clearly, McLoughlin's whole position was in jeopardy, for neither Simpson

nor the London Committee could accept a semi-independent rule on the Columbia; but a tragic incident now widened the breach between Simpson and McLoughlin to irreparable dimensions.

After an abortive attempt to reconcile his differences with McLoughlin in a final meeting at Honolulu, Simpson continued his journey to Russia by way of the Company's northern coastal posts. At Stikine he was shocked to find that the officer in charge, McLoughlin's son John, had been shot dead by his own men—'in a drunken fray' he reported to McLoughlin. The letter was harsh and tactless; after the briefest of investigations, Simpson handed the suspected killer (Heroux) over to the Russians, discharged another servant (Kannaquassé) who had been involved in an earlier attempt to shoot young McLoughlin, and then wrote to the bereaved father:

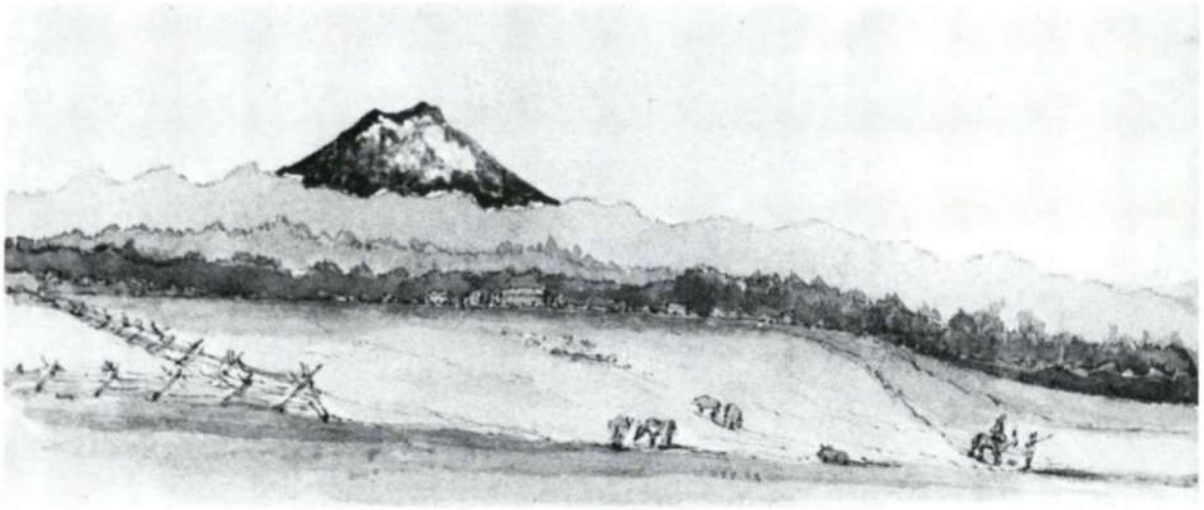
> From all I can collect, the whole conduct & management of Mr. McLoughlin were exceedingly bad, and his violence when under the influence of liquor, which was very frequently the case, amounting to insanity . . . I consider it due to the people to say, that as a body, their conduct throughout has been fully better than could have been expected under such inhuman treatment as they were frequently exposed to.

Simpson's hasty prejudgement of the tragedy was the beginning rather than the end of the affair. McLoughlin carried on an investigation into the killing which soon produced a very different picture of Stikine: of an isolated post garrisoned with notorious ne'er-do-wells, resentful of their officer, not because he was a violent drunkard who terrorized them, but because of his insistence on the virtues of hard work, and the dangers of cohabitation with Indian women. By 1843 the Secretary of the London Committee, Archibald Barclay, was writing privately to Simpson that,

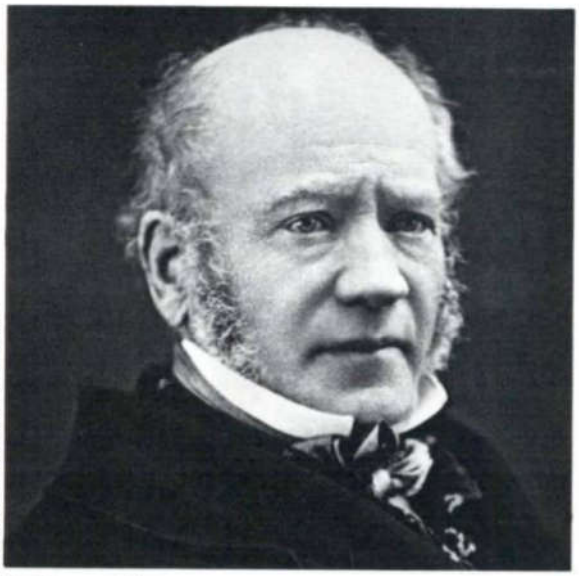
> The crime was clearly long premeditated and if ever men deserved hanging, Urbain Heroux, Pierre Kanaquasse, and the scoundrel McPherson, ought to be *strung up*. It is evident that the charges of habitual intoxication and excessive severity were trumped up after the deed was committed as a screen to the villany of the culprits.

There was no possibility that the London Committee would disown or reprimand its overseas governor, and indeed McLoughlin played into Simpson's hands by his obsessive preoccupation with his son's death. His letters were filled with endless recriminations on the killing and with cantankerous objections to any other proposal emanating from Simpson; his embarrassed subordinates strove hard to avoid mention of Stikine; and Simpson was able with some justice if scant understanding to accuse McLoughlin of sacrificing his judgement to his feelings. Simpson's own behaviour confirms suspicions that the curt and peremptory manner which had always been evident in his relations with subordinates had hardened into an overbearing, insensitive rejection of any querying of his judgement.

The dispute between Simpson and McLoughlin was the more regrettable from the Company's viewpoint since it coincided with the emergence in a new and dangerous form of the 'Oregon Question'. One repercussion of the Stikine incident was that it prevented any possibility of agreement between Governor and Chief Factor on the best attitude to be adopted towards the long-expected influx of American settlers into the Columbia region. Here both geography and demography told against the Company. As the American representative involved in the inconclusive boundary negotiations of 1826-7 had prophesied: 'Under whatever nominal sovereignty that country may be placed, and whatever its ultimate destinies may be, it is nearly reduced to a certainty that it will be almost exclusively peopled by the surplus population of the United States'. On the American side the passes into the Oregon country were negotiable by wagons; the American fur-traders were followed by missionaries and military officers on survey, and by the

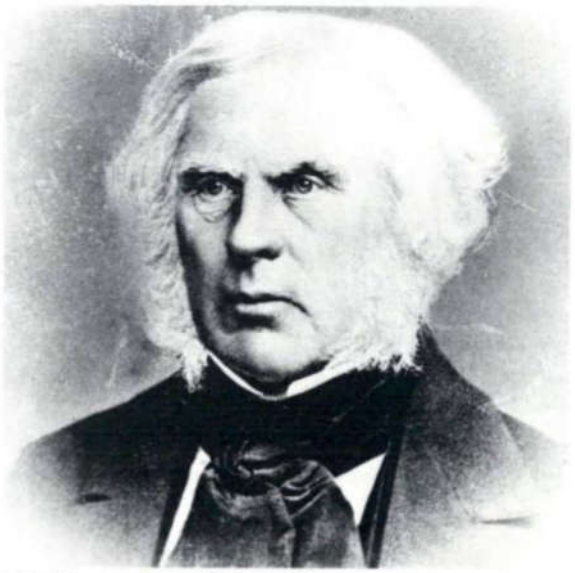


Cowlitz Farm, which was operated by Puget Sound Agricultural Company, with Mt Rainier in background; a sketch by A. G. Dallas, Company Director who went in 1857 to look into west coast affairs; by courtesy of Mrs. D. S. G. Briscoe.



NOTMAN COPY OF A DAGUERREOTYPE

Sir George Simpson.



OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Chief Factor John McLoughlin.

late 1830s small parties of settlers were reaching Oregon from the east. A half-hearted attempt by the Hudson's Bay Company to redirect 'respectable half breed and other settlers' from Red River to the Oregon region in an attempt to build a barrier against American encroachments failed; only a score or so of families made the move, and most of them soon crossed the Columbia to settle in the fertile Willamette valley.

Simpson had long been prepared for a boundary settlement which would fix the frontier along the line of the Columbia, but meanwhile he saw it as his duty to the Company to discourage any infiltration by Americans—whether they were traders, settlers, or missionaries. Thus in 1841 he wrote with suspicion that 'the American Missionaries are making more rapid progress in the extension of their establishment and in the improvement of their farms than in the ostensible objects of their residence in this country'. McLoughlin held different views; he argued that eventual American dominance was inevitable, and that it was both politic and good business to supply the outriders of the American migration with provisions, implements, and seeds. He notified Simpson with some satisfaction that among some recent American immigrants he had met at Fort Vancouver

> One of them said, 'I came here strongly prejudiced against the Hudson's Bay Company, and expected I would have to fight them, and that there would be an English Man-of-War here to drive us away, but instead of that all the immigrants are treated most kindly by the Hudson's Bay Company, and we found, when we got within reach of their establishments, boats with provisions to relieve our wants, and to transport us to the place of our destination'.

By 1841 the Americans were arriving in their scores, by 1843 in their hundreds, and thereafter in their thousands; the Company realized that it could no longer hold to its old positions. James Douglas might urge a policy of firmness on Simpson—'there is danger in receding; strength, power and safety are to be found only in a bold advance'—but against a rising tide of settlement and mounting political hysteria in America the Company was helpless. Domestic and international politics were to decide the issue, which soon resolved itself into a question of whether the boundary would be drawn along the Columbia or farther north. The belligerent cry of 'Fifty-four forty or fight' figured prominently in James K. Polk's successful presidential campaign of 1844, but as other outlets of 'Manifest Destiny' in Texas and elsewhere caught American imaginations, the Oregon Treaty of 1846 between the British and American governments accepted the 49th parallel as the international frontier from the Rocky Mountains to the coast. In the last tense months of negotiation the Hudson's Bay Company had been able to do little to influence events, but its presence on the coast for the previous quarter-century, and that of the North Westers before it, had ensured that modern Canada would have a Pacific coastline.

An incidental result of the Treaty was that McLoughlin, who in 1846 retired from the Company's service to live in Oregon City, spent the last eleven years of his life on American soil. Ironically for a man who had helped American settlers and sympathized with American republicanism, he had to endure considerable local opposition and hostility; and towards the end of his life was a venerable but pathetic figure. McLoughlin himself attributed his decline to Simpson's malevolence—'Sir George Simpson's Visit here in 1841 has cost me Dear' he once wrote—but in a sense he was his own worst enemy. At a time when the Hudson's Bay Company was increasingly aware of the implications of its continental responsibilities and involvements, 'the Doctor' with his swashbuckling ways and cavalier treatment of instructions had already become an anachronism. •

'Fort Garry - Winnipeg - St Boniface,' a watercolour by J. R. Simpson, 1871. H B C COLLN

At the left across the Red and Assiniboine Rivers is Fort Garry with the residence of Adams Archibald, governor of the new Province of Manitoba, its capital Winnipeg seen in the cluster of buildings, second from left being the H B C store; below the bank is St Boniface with H B C store (third from right), Grey Nunnery, Cathedral, and College.

X THE END OF COMPANY MONOPOLY AND RULE

THE OREGON AFFAIR gave the Hudson's Bay Company a foretaste of pressures to come: settler problems, international tensions, and involvement in the domestic politics of Britain, Canada, and the United States. In a Britain where humanitarians and free traders vied with each other in exerting dominance over public and government alike, the position of a monopolistic trading organization whose Indian trade was allegedly based on intimidation and debauchery was not a comfortable one. In 1848 Gladstone criticized the Company along these lines in a speech in the House of Commons which in places resembled one of Dobbs's onslaughts a century earlier. Even more reminiscent of the eighteenth-century challenges to the Company's monopoly was an attack of 1857:

> The Management of their affairs is inscrutable . . . it is like a commercial tomb, closed with the key of death to all except a favoured few . . . its councils unfathomable and its secrets unknown . . . its revenues are acquired in secret and distributed in silence.

In North America even larger issues loomed. No defined boundary existed between the Union of Canada and Rupert's Land, and by the late 1840s Canadian politicians and newspapers were drawing attention to the vast, unpeopled areas to the west which lay under the Company's commercial aegis. Unless some decisive action were taken, American settlement and annexation were serious possibilities, particularly at Red River, for long an area of friction between settlers, Métis, and Company servants. Selkirk's heirs had sold back to the Company their rights in the colony in 1836, but the Company soon found Red River a *damnosa heriditas*. The colony presented problems of law and order which the Company was unable to resolve without the aid of British troops, and the whole Red River area was becoming drawn more and more into a southern economic sphere as the Americans developed their steamer, rail, and postal service to St Paul. As in Oregon, the hard facts of geography and demography were against the Company. The broad valley of the Red River made links between the colony and Minnesota infinitely easier than those across difficult terrain east to Fort William or north to York Factory; while the population of Minnesota in the 1850s was increasing from a few thousand at the beginning of the decade to more than 170,000 by 1860.

Faced with this situation, the more perceptive officials of the Hudson's Bay Company—Pelly, Ellice, and Simpson certainly—recognized that the Company's trading monopoly and political powers over an area which dwarfed in size the Union of Canada could not survive much longer. With its limited financial resources, and at most three thousand employees scattered thinly over its immense domains, the Company was finding that success as a business corporation offered little protection against external pressures. The Licence for Exclusive Trade awarded in 1821 had been renewed for twenty-one years in 1838, and as the time drew near for a decision on whether a further renewal should be granted, the Palmerston government set up in 1857 a Select Committee of the House of Commons to inquire into the Company's position and practices. On questions of trading methods the Company emerged almost unscathed from an interrogation which rested for the most part on ancient

prejudices; but on the Company's attitude towards colonization not even Simpson was able to argue a convincing case, and it was here that the parliamentary committee made its most drastic recommendations. The Company's settlements on Vancouver Island (a colony since 1849) together with the mainland opposite were to be separated from the Company and given Crown Colony status as soon as possible. If the necessary arrangements could be made, the Red River and Saskatchewan regions were to be annexed by Canada. In those parts of Rupert's Land and the Indian Territories unsuitable for settlement, the Company's monopolistic licence should be renewed.

The general consensus of opinion was clear enough—as the Hudson's Bay men themselves had always admitted, the fur trade must retreat in the face of settlement—but how this transfer of rights recommended by the committee for the prairies was to be accomplished presented almost insurmountable difficulties in the next dozen years. Ellice stated the problem to the Colonial Secretary, Labouchere, at the time of the inquiry with disarming candour: 'It is a question of a million of money'. The financial resources of Canada were altogether too slight, and its political unity too fragile, to cope with the implications of buying out the Company's rights; as the Chief Justice of Canada West, William Henry Draper, had admitted before the Select Committee, claims that Canada stretched to the Pacific could be regarded as 'very visionary'. Nor was the British government, in the heyday of Gladstonian budgetary economy, inclined either to foot the immediate bill, or to accept the long-term expense of governing and defending new land-bound colonies between the Great Lakes and the Rockies. Bulwer Lytton, who became Colonial Secretary in May 1858, might speak of Red River as 'an essential arch . . . to that great viaduct by which we hope one day to connect the harbours of Vancouver Island with the Gulf of St Lawrence'; but the only result of his efforts was a reversal of the recommendations of the parliamentary committee. The Company retained its territorial rights but (in 1859) lost its Licence for Exclusive Trade. The loss was a legalistic rather than a practical one, for the Company continued to monopolize the fur trade of the North, but it was a warning to the Company that the days of the Charter itself might be numbered.

In brief, both the British and Canadian governments agreed that the Company's traditional rights were no longer appropriate in the coming era of continental expansion (though the depth of this conviction fluctuated as ministries came and went on both sides of the Atlantic), but each was determined that the other should bear the responsibility and cost of any change. The Company for its part was ready to receive offers for the transfer of all or part of its privileges, but was quietly insistent that it must receive proper compensation. A triangular confrontation of this nature is often a guarantee of stalemate, and no significant advance occurred until the appearance on the scene of Edward Watkin, promoter extraordinary, and an enthusiastic advocate of transcontinental road, rail, and telegraph links on British territory. Without the Company's territories such a scheme was impossible, and faced with the disinclination of governments in Britain and Canada to buy out the Company, Watkin determined on a private purchase. In his *Recollections*, published many years later, Watkin gave a colourful, and probably inaccurate, account of an exchange between the Colonial Secretary, Newcastle, the Governor of the Company, Berens, and himself on the subject:

> In response to our demand for a large tract of land through the 'fertile belt' of the Hudson's Bay territory, the Governor answered, almost in terror, to the Duke of Newcastle:—'What! sequester our very tap-root! Take away the fertile lands where our buffaloes feed! Let in all kinds of people to squat and settle, and frighten away the fur-bearing animals they don't hunt and kill! Impossible. Destruction—extinction—of our time-honoured industry. If these gentlemen are so patriotic, why don't they buy us out?' To this outburst the Duke quietly replied: 'What is your price?' Mr Berens, the Governor, answered: 'Well, about a million and a half.'

Despite the Company's alleged alarm at Watkin's proposal, the transaction was pushed through in the summer of 1863 with remarkable speed. Watkin was supported by the International Financial Society, a consortium of some of the most important banking houses in the City of London, which bought the total Hudson's Bay Company stock of £500,000 at the rate of £300 for each £100 of stock (the market price was only £190). The London management of the Company changed as a result of the sale, with an imposing new Governor in the

H B C COLLN

Edward Ellice Sr. supported the Company in his evidence at the parliamentary inquiry.

Sir Edmund Head governed the H B C 1863 to 1868.

person of Sir Edmund Head, formerly Governor-General of the Province of Canada, and a Committee which carried only two members of the old one. The stated objective of the new directors and shareholders was to realize the settlement, mineral, and communication potential of the Company's territories; and although a prospectus issued at the end of June referred to the continuing importance of the fur trade, it laid most stress on 'the new policy of colonization' which would mean that 'the Southern District will be opened to European colonization under a liberal and systematic scheme of land settlement'. But the very nature of the sale of 1863 meant that the Company was less than ever prepared to part with its rights without adequate financial compensation, for the expectations of the new shareholders who had bought stock at an inflated price were pitched at a high level. Meetings of the General Court of shareholders were no longer a placid formality; they tended now to be turbulent affairs at which the Committee came under heavy fire for its inability either to exploit the Company's territories itself or to reach some lucrative agreement with the British and Canadian governments for them to do so.

The increasing complexities of the Company's position after 1863 had a bearing on its choice of Governors. For the first time since the seventeenth century men of political weight such as Head, Lord Kimberley and Sir Stafford Northcote were appointed. The rapid succession of Governors was matched by the turnover of Colonial Secretaries in the British Government—four between 1863 and 1869—to add a further element of uncertainty to a situation now feeling on one side the menace of American restlessness south of the forty-ninth parallel, and on the other the hope that a successful conclusion of the protracted Canadian confederation negotiations of 1864-7 would lead to the emergence of a political structure strong enough to negotiate the transfer of the Company's rights. Meanwhile a variety of schemes appeared and disappeared, including an ingenious one proffered by Newcastle in 1864 under which the Company would surrender some of its territorial rights to the Crown, but would be paid, acre by acre, only as the land was actually sold. In a sense the process was a race against time, but a race in slow motion, in which the issue was whether the jumble of negotiations between the British and Canadian governments, the Company, and a series of private syndicates, would produce some solution before a crisis flared on the sensitive American frontier.

The coming into existence of the Dominion of Canada in July 1867 cleared the way to a settlement. The new federal government possessed a status and authority lacking in the former provincial one, and the prospects of westward expansion and the future inclusion of British Columbia in the confederation had played a significant part in the final negotiations. But cost remained as much an obstacle as ever. The infant federal structure was financially weak, and there was vocal political opposition in Canada to the prospect of paying a private company for the surrender of its territorial rights. With no sign of the two parties directly interested moving to close the gap between their positions, it was left to the British

Sir Stafford Northcote, Company governor 1869-74 held a number of high government offices.

Government to make the final and decisive intervention. In March 1869 Gladstone's Colonial Secretary, Granville, laid down terms to both sides. The Company was to surrender Rupert's Land to the Crown, which would transfer it to the Canadian Government. Canada, helped if necessary with a guarantee of a loan from the British government, was to pay £300,000 in compensation to the Company, which would also be allowed to keep its 120 trading posts with some adjoining land, and could claim up to one-twentieth of the land allocated in the next fifty years in the 'Fertile Belt' (defined as stretching in a south-north direction from the American frontier to the North Saskatchewan, and east-west from Lake Winnipeg and the Lake of the Woods to the Rockies). Granville was not prepared to make concessions of substance to either side, and after tense discussions within the Committee and some uproar at the General Court, the Company accepted the proposals. The transfer was arranged for 1 December 1869, though the Riel uprising delayed matters until 15 July 1870.

The speculators of 1863 might be disappointed by the terms of the Deed of Surrender, but the agreement retrieved the Company from an awkward if not impossible position, in which an alarming gulf had opened between its privileges and its responsibilities, its commitments and its strength. Stripped of the territorial implications of the Charter of 1670, the Company was able to revert to its essential role as a fur-trading and business organization. The fate of the new chartered companies operating in the tropics in the late Victorian period was soon to show that private corporations were untrustworthy instruments for wielding political power; and its experience since Selkirk's day had proved that the Hudson's Bay Company was ill-equipped to deal with the problems of agricultural settlement, gold rushes, railroads, and political tensions which westward expansion brought in its train. Though in broad terms the Company stood opposed to settlement, its presence had not handicapped Canada's national development; for before Confederation no Canadian government could have handled the administrative, economic, and transportation problems which the west presented. The fur traders, and here the North Westers must not be forgotten, had for long been the sole British representatives on the prairies and across the Rockies onto the Pacific slope. They had helped to secure rather than slow the development of modern Canada. And they remained after the Deed of Surrender. Amid the complexities of the negotiations of 1857-70 it is all too easy to overlook the fact that the fur trade continued, and indeed prospered as the guide-lines laid down by Simpson were followed long after his death in 1860. The reverberations of the Sale of 1863 and the Deed of Surrender brought anxiety to the traders in their distant posts, but their journals, their correspondence with the London Committee, their account books, show the same preoccupation with the tactics and strategy of the fur trade as ever. To read the notes on fur prices, the perennial problems of the trade standard with the Indians, the concern about routes and shipping, is to be reminded that from 1670 to 1870 the Company was essentially a business corporation trading for furs. Whatever its defects in other roles, this it did supremely well, becoming increasingly efficient and confident as the decades passed. Above all it had developed over this long period a quite remarkable gift of survival and self-preservation. Long before its tercentenary celebrations of 1970 it had established itself as the oldest surviving among those great overseas corporations which were founded in Britain's imperial past but had generally failed to adapt to the changing conditions of the modern world. ◆

PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA

A decade after the surrender artist S. P. Hall climbed to the roof of St Boniface College with Father Dugas to sketch the growing city of Winnipeg across the river.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout these Highlights of Company History excerpts from Hudson's Bay Record Society volumes and documents in the Company archives by permission of the Hudson's Bay Company. Other works cited: J. A. Williamson, editor, *The Cabot Voyages and Bristol Discovery under Henry VII*, London 1962, The Hakluyt Society, by permission of the Cambridge University Press; A. T. Adams, editor, *The Explorations of Pierre Esprit Radisson*, Minneapolis 1961, by permission of Ross & Haines, Inc.; J. B. Tyrrell, editor, *Documents Relating to the Early History of Hudson Bay*, Toronto 1931, by permission of The Champlain Society; R. Douglas and J. N. Wallace, editors, *Twenty Years of York Factory 1694-1714*, Ottawa 1926; Arthur G. Doughty and Chester Martin, editors, *The Kelsey Papers*, Ottawa 1929; A. S. Morton, *History of the Canadian West 1870-71*, London; J. B. Tyrrell, editor, *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor 1774-92*, Toronto 1934, The Champlain Society; W. Stewart Wallace, editor, *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, Toronto 1934, by permission of The Champlain Society; Frederick Merk, editor, *Fur Trade and Empire*, Cambridge, Mass. 1968, by permission of The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

MANITOBA ARCHIVES

The old library at York Factory provided serious books, the earliest published in 1714, many in Latin or French, with a sprinkling of 19th century novels and bound magazines.

FURTHER READING

Suggested by Glyndwr Williams

GENERAL

FOR ANY SERIOUS STUDENT of the fur trade the official two-volume history of the Company by E. E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1870* (London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1958-59; Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1960) is indispensable. In *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1967) Professor Rich has distilled his knowledge of the subject into a shorter work, and given proportionately more attention to the French and Canadian side. The only works which approach the official history in scale and breadth are A. S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (London, [1939]), long out of print though a new edition is promised; and Paul C. Phillips, *The Fur Trade* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1961), lacking documentation from the Hudson's Bay Company archives, but valuable because of its inclusion of the American as well as the Canadian aspect of the fur trade. The classic study by Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (paperback edition based on the revised edition of 1956, with a foreword by Robin W. Winks, University of Toronto Press, 1962) still retains much of its value, though during his researches in the 1920s Professor Innis did not have the access to Company records in England which later historians have enjoyed. Among the shorter histories of the Company Douglas MacKay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the Hudson's Bay Company* (paperback edition based on the revised edition of 1949 by Alice MacKay, Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1966) is outstanding. Written in lively yet critical vein it remains the most popular work on the Company and has the advantage over the other studies mentioned here of bringing (briefly) the Company's history to the Second World War. Among several reputable works dealing with the exploration of North America J. B. Brebner, *The Explorers of North America 1492-1806* (2nd edition, London, A. & C. Black, 1955) remains sound and reliable; a more vivid though still scholarly narrative is Bernard DeVoto, *Westward the Course of Empire* (London, 1953; New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1953).

I. THE GRANTING OF THE CHARTER

The evidence for Sebastian Cabot's possible discovery of Hudson Bay in the early sixteenth century is marshalled in J. A. Williamson, editor, *The Cabot Voyages and Bristol Discovery under Henry VII* (London, The Hakluyt Society, 1962). On the voyages of exploration generally into Hudson Bay a reliable summary is Ernest S. Dodge, *Northwest by Sea* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1961). Radisson and Groseilliers have an excellent joint biography in Grace Lee Nute, *Caesars of the Wilderness* (New York, D. Appleton-Century, 1943). Radisson's *Voyages* are most easily accessible in Arthur T. Adams, editor, *The Explorations of Pierre Esprit Radisson* (Minneapolis, Ross & Haines Inc., 1961), in which different itineraries of Radisson's movements are propounded from those given in Nute, and the argument advanced that the two Frenchmen reached the shores of Hudson Bay, as Radisson claimed. The full text of the Charter of 1670 is printed in E. E. Rich, editor, *Minutes of the Hudson's Bay Company 1671-1674* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1942; London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1942); the most searching examination of its terms is in Rich, *History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. I. Brief biographical sketches of the first investors in the Company will be found in Fulmer Mood, 'Adventurers of 1670', *The Beaver* (Winnipeg, June 1945).

II. CONFLICT IN THE BAY

Several important French accounts of the campaigns in the Bay are printed in J. B. Tyrrell, editor, *Documents Relating to the Early History of Hudson Bay* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1931). The Company's formidable antagonist, Iberville, has yet to find a definitive biography. Nellis M. Crouse, *Lemoyne d'Iberville: Soldier of New France* (Toronto, Ryerson, 1954; Cornell University Press, 1954) is lively if somewhat superficial; more stimulating lines of enquiry are suggested in Bernard Pothier's contribution on Iberville in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto Press, Les Presses de l'université Laval, 1969), Vol. II. Jérémie's narrative of the French occupation of York Fort is available in English translation in R. Douglas and J. N. Wallace, editors, *Twenty Years of York Factory 1694-1714 Jérémie's Account of Hudson Strait and Bay* (Ottawa, Thorburn & Abbott, 1926). K. G. Davies has some pertinent comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the two sides in his introduction to E. E. Rich, editor, *Hudson's Bay Copy Booke of Letters Commissions Instructions Outward 1688-1696* (London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1957). Reports of the excavations at Albany between 1960 and 1964 are contained in two articles by W. A. Kenyon in *The Beaver*, 'Old Fort Albany Relics', (Winnipeg, Outfit 292, Summer 1961), and 'The "Old House" at Albany' (Winnipeg, Outfit 296, Autumn 1965).

III. THE DOBBS CRISIS

Many of the writer's arguments in this section are set out at more length in 'The Hudson's Bay Company and its Critics in the Eighteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, Vol. XX (London, 1970), and he is grateful to the Council of the Royal Historical Society for permission to use material contained in that paper. An earlier book, Glyndwr Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century* (London, Longmans, 1962) deals with the Middleton and Moor expeditions, and the Company's reluctant involvement in the search for a passage. The career of the Company's arch-critic, Arthur Dobbs, is summarized in Desmond Clarke, *Arthur Dobbs Esquire, 1689-1765 Surveyor-General of Ireland Prospector and Governor of North Carolina* (London, 1958). Isham's journals and observations for the period make fascinating reading, and have been published in E. E. Rich and A. M. Johnson, editors, *James Isham's Observations on Hudsons Bay, 1743 and Notes and Observations on a Book entitled* 'A Voyage to Hudsons Bay in the Dobbs Galley, 1749' (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1949; London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1949). Several contemporary published works, including Arthur Dobbs, *An Account of the Countries adjoining to Hudson's Bay* (London, 1744), Henry Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's Bay* (London, 1748), and Joseph Robson, *An Account of Six Years Residence in Hudson's Bay* (London, 1752) are now available as reprints (Clarke-Irwin, Toronto).

IV. KELSEY, HENDAY AND THE PRAIRIES

Kelsey's journal of his inland journey, together with other documents relating to his career, are printed in Arthur G. Doughty and Chester Martin, editors, *The Kelsey Papers* (Ottawa, King's Printer, 1929). The results of a detailed investigation of his services with the Company are given in K. G. Davies and A. M. Johnson, editors, *Letters from Hudson Bay 1703-40* (London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1965), Appendix E. The most recent biographical sketch is by Davies in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. II. Only one out of the four extant versions of Henday's journal of 1754-55 has been printed, in L. J. Burpee, editor, 'York Factory to the Blackfeet Country. The Journal of Anthony Hendry, 1754-55', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 1907. In *Behold the Shining Mountains* (Edmonton, Applied Art Products, 1954) James G. MacGregor turned to good effect his intimate knowledge of the Alberta and Saskatchewan country over which Henday travelled, but did not consult the unprinted Henday journals in the Hudson's Bay Company archives.

V. CUMBERLAND HOUSE: THE MOVE INLAND

Hearne's journal describing his establishment of Cumberland House is printed in J. B. Tyrrell, editor, *The Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor* (Toronto,

The Champlain Society, 1934). His well-known published work of 1795, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort, in Hudson's Bay, to the Northern Ocean . . . In the Years 1769, 1770, 1771 and 1772*, has been reprinted several times, most recently with an introduction by Richard Glover (Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1958). Three Hudson's Bay Record Society volumes, all with long and stimulating introductions by Richard Glover, contain full documentation on the implications of the move inland: E. E. Rich and A. M. Johnson, editors, *Cumberland House Journals and Inland Journal 1775-82, First Series, 1775-79* (London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1951), *Second Series, 1779-82* (London, the Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1952); Glyndwr Williams, editor, *Andrew Graham's Observations on Hudson's Bay 1767-1791* (London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1969). A volume which represents a landmark in historical work on the early years of the North West Company is W. Stewart Wallace, editor, *Documents Relating to the North West Company* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1934); not the least important part of this study is the appendix, 'Biographical Dictionary of the Nor'Westers'. Previous to this one of the few serious studies of the subject was G. C. Davidson, *The North West Company* (Berkeley, California University Press, 1918).

VI. FUR TRADE RIVALRY

A brief essay by W. L. Morton, 'The North West Company: Pedlars Extraordinary', printed in *Aspects of the Fur Trade* (Selected Papers of the 1965 North American Fur Trade Conference, Minnesota Historical Society, St Paul, 1967) provides a good recent introduction to the nature of the North West Company. Marjorie W. Campbell, *The North West Company* (University of Toronto Press, 1957), is a colourful account which does ample justice to the North Westers' cause in their struggle for fur trade dominance. Among a host of journals and biographies relating to individual traders the following are especially worth notice: Richard Glover, editor, *David Thompson's Narrative, 1784-1812* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1962); Harold A. Innis, *Peter Pond, Fur Trader and Adventurer* (Toronto, Irwin & Gordon, 1930); Charles M. Gates, editor, with an introduction by Grace Lee Nute, *Five Fur Traders of the Northwest* (new edition with foreword by Theodore C. Blegen, Minnesota Historical Society, St Paul, 1965); James G. MacGregor, *Peter Fidler: Canada's Forgotten Surveyor 1769-1822* (Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1966); E. Coues, editor, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest, the Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry . . . and of David Thompson* (New York, 1897; reprinted, Minneapolis, Ross & Haines Inc., 1965); W. Kaye Lamb, editor, *Sixteen Years in the Indian Country. The Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon, 1800-1816* (Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1957). On the use of inland boats by the Hudson's Bay Company see Richard Glover, 'York Boats', *The Beaver* (Winnipeg, Outfit 279, March 1949); further information on this subject, together with a study of the Company's westward expansion along the Saskatchewan, will be found in Alice M. Johnson, editor, *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence 1795-1802* (London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1967). Eric W. Morse, *Fur Trade Canoe Routes of Canada/ Then and Now* (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1969) is a splendid account, with first-rate maps and illustrations, of the historical importance and present-day condition of the canoe trade-routes from Montreal to the Rockies.

VII. THE RED RIVER AFFAIR

Selkirk's Red River project is set in its historical and geographical perspective in the early chapters of W. L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History* (University of Toronto Press, 2nd ed. 1967); a more detailed, if prosaic, account is J. P. Pritchett, *The Red River Valley 1811-1849* (Toronto, Ryerson, 1942; New Haven, Yale University Press, 1942). After appearing in caricature in several modern works romantically inclined towards the North Wester cause, Selkirk has at last found a sympathetic and scholarly biography, J. M. Gray, *Lord Selkirk of Red River* (London, 1963; Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1963). The Métis for their part are studied at length in M. Giraud, *Le Métis Canadien: son rôle dans l'histoire des provinces de l'Ouest* (Paris, 1945). The character of Colin Robertson is revealed through his own idiosyncratic letters in E. E. Rich and R. Harvey Fleming, editors, *Colin Robertson's Correspondence Book, September 1817 to September 1822* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1939; London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1939). His diary from 1814 to 1817, of which there are copies in the Public Archives of Canada and in the Archives of the Hudson's Bay Company, has never been published. Though it is a partisan account which must be approached warily, it gives a vivid insight into the fur-trade rivalries of the period immediately before the coalition, and the present writer has drawn heavily upon it.

VIII. COALITION

Although some of the earlier negotiations between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company are covered in a recent paper by K. G. Davies, 'From Competition to Union', *Aspects of the Fur Trade* (Selected Papers of the 1965 North American Fur Trade Conference, Minnesota Historical Society, St Paul, 1967), no detailed analysis of the coalition discussions is available outside the relevant sections in the histories by E. E. Rich and A. S. Morton. To balance the lack of monographs the period is rich in published journals and diaries, notably E. E. Rich, editor, *Simpson's Athabasca Journal* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1938; London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1938), *Simpson's 1828 Journey to the Columbia* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1947; London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1947); Frederick Merk, editor, *Fur Trade and Empire. George*

Simpson's Journal . . . . 1824-25 . . (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, revised edition 1968); 'The Diary of Nicholas Garry, Deputy-Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, from 1822-35', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 1900. Less well-known are the recollections of a humbler fur trader, John Tod—of particular interest because of their evidence of victimization and prejudice in the fur trade long after the coalition had officially ended the rivalry of Hudson's Bay men and North Westers. These memoirs have been reprinted as 'John Tod: "Career of a Scotch Boy" ', with notes by Madge Wolfenden, *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* (XVIII, 1954), pp. 133-238.

IX. SIMPSON AND McLOUGHLIN

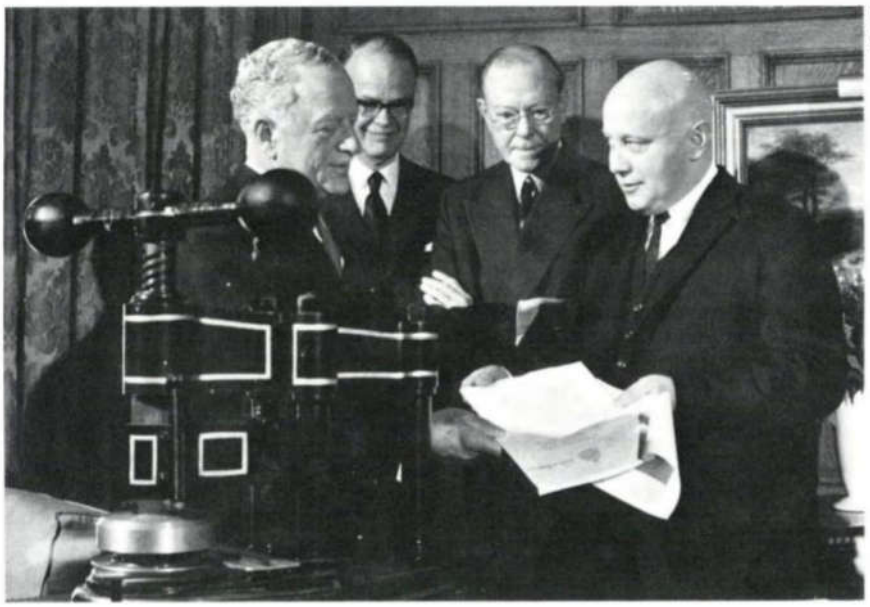
One of the more serious gaps in Canadian historiography is the lack of an authoritative biography of George Simpson. A. S. Morton, *Sir George Simpson: Overseas Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Toronto, Dent & Sons, 1944) is an essay, not a full-length biography, though it can be supplemented by numerous articles on Simpson's career. Two which are probably accessible to readers of this periodical are Grace Lee Nute, 'Jehu of the Waterways', *The Beaver* (Winnipeg, Outfit 291, Summer 1960), a description of Simpson's hectic travels based mainly on Frances Simpson's journal; and John S. Galbraith, 'The Little Emperor', *Ibid.* (Outfit 291, Winter 1960). Simpson figures large in an impressive analysis of the Company's activities in Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor 1821-1869* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957). For some contemporary (and in places unjust) criticism of Simpson see W. S. Wallace, editor, *John McLean's Notes of a Twenty-five Years' Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1932). Although several biographies of John McLoughlin have appeared, he is best studied through his own correspondence, three volumes of which have been published with informative introductions by W. Kaye Lamb: E. E. Rich, editor, *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee: First Series, 1825-38* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1941; London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1941); *Second Series, 1839-44* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1943; London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1943); *Third Series, 1844-46* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1944; London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1944). Fort Vancouver itself has been studied by John A. Hussey in an admirable volume, *The History of Fort Vancouver and its Physical Structure* (Washington State Historical Society, [1957]). Confronted with the large, and growing, number of books on the Columbia trade and the Oregon crisis, readers may find useful the brief survey contained in the early sections of Dorothy O. Johansen and Charles M. Gates, *Empire of the Columbia: A History of the Pacific Northwest* (2nd edition, New York, Harper & Row, 1967).

A few of the Hudson's Bay Company archives.

X. THE END OF COMPANY MONOPOLY AND RULE

The most reliable guides to the Company's position during the tangled negotiations of the 1860s remain the standard histories by Rich and Galbraith. W. L. Morton, *The Critical Years. The Union of British North America 1857-1873* (Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1964), outlines the general movement of political events in Canada which shaped the Company's fate in this period. Walter N. Sage has examined the implications of the Report of the Select Committee of 1857 in 'Spotlight on the Hudson's Bay Company', *The Beaver* (Winnipeg, Outfit 288, Summer 1957). Alvin C. Gluek, *Minnesota and the Manifest Destiny of the Canadian Northwest* (University of Toronto Press, 1965) is a careful study of the tensions which developed at and about Red River in the years before the Riel Rebellion. For a picture of the Canadian west in the late 1850s we are fortunate to have a superbly produced volume on John Palliser's British North American Exploring Expedition, Irene M. Spry, editor, *The Papers of the Palliser Expedition 1857-1860* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1968). Events resulting from the transfer of the Company's territory to Canada, well researched and documented, are dealt with in George F. G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 1960).

The volumes of The Champlain Society and The Hudson's Bay Record Society which are distributed only to members of the respective Societies may usually be consulted in the bigger libraries. The first twelve Hudson's Bay Record Society volumes, 1938 to 1949 inclusive, have recently been reprinted and are available to non-members from Kraus Reprint Ltd., FL-9491, Nendeln, Liechtenstein. ◆



MALAK

The new Charter bearing the Great Seal of Canada affixed 29 May 1970 in Ottawa. Shown, from left, are His Excellency Roland Michener, Governor General; Company solicitor David Quest, Q.C.; former director Graham Towers; Hon. Ron Basford, Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

OUR FIRST CANADIAN CHARTER

THIS SUMMER IN WINNIPEG Queen Elizabeth II remarked that in her dual capacity, as Sovereign of two countries, she had had the interesting experience of revoking most of the original Charter of the Hudson's Bay Company and granting a new one as Queen of Canada.

May 1970 held two significant dates for the Company. The 2nd of May was the 300th anniversary of the granting of the original Royal Charter by Charles II. The 29th marked the granting of two Supplemental Royal Charters: the Charter of 1970 given at Westminster under the Queen's sign manual and the Canadian Charter bearing the Great Seal of Canada, witnessed at Ottawa on behalf of the Queen by the Governor General.

These events had followed an Extraordinary General Court of the Proprietors held in London on 28 May to consider a recommendation from the Governor and Committee that the Company be transferred from the United Kingdom to Canada. This proposal, involving governments, policy, finance, banks, directors, and proprietors, had been under consideration for some years. With a few dissenters, the resolution was approved.

The Charter of 1970 granted at Westminster annulled all provisions of previous charters except the incorporating section of the original 1670 Charter. On the same day, the Canadian Charter granted at Ottawa continued the Company as a body corporate and subject to the laws of Canada. Among the exceptional provisions was one exempting the Company from including 'Limited' in its name, and one specifying that the governor and deputy governor and at least two-thirds of the directors should be residents of Canada or the United Kingdom.

Though the full title of the Company remains unchanged from its original 'The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay' terms in use until this year have been modernized. The Proprietors are now more prosaically Shareholders; the General Court has become a Shareholders' Meeting; the Governor and Committee, who once wrote to their factors in the Bay as 'your loveing friendes' are a Board of Directors who sign themselves 'yours truly'—but dividends are still dividends.

In the preamble to 'this Our first Canadian Charter' it is stated 'the Company has carried on trade in the territories now comprising Canada from the time of its incorporation until the present day without interruption; . . . and that in view of the expansion in the size and complexity of the Company's operations it has become important to the continuing growth and prosperity of the Company that it should become resident in and directed from Canada where 95 per cent of its assets and 98 per cent of its employees are located'. So instead of meeting places in London that ranged from palace to pub, from tower to dwelling, the Company following its lawful rights of old 'to Erect and build such Castles Fortificacions Fortes . . . Townes or Villages . . . as they in theire Discrecions shall thinke fitt' has thought fit to convert its old warehouse in Winnipeg into a modern castle to be its 20th century headquarters unless 'changed in accordance with the provisions of the [Canada Corporations] Act'. The old headquarters, Beaver House, with its offices, archives, fur storage and auction hall, will remain to represent the Company in London. ◆

True Copy
HUDSONS BAY COMPANY
Of all the Letters &c th W y Journall
or Diary Transactions here at York Fort
in Hays River Hudsons Bay
A M E R K A
Belonging to the Honourable the
Hudsons Bay Company
Under the Comand of Capt James Knight
Gover in Chief of this Country for y Hond y
England
Commencing from Sept 5 1714

The unusual title page of the earliest York Factory Journal in the archives, 1714-15.

THREE HUNDRED YEARS OF RECORDS

In this tercentenary year it has been decided by the Hudson's Bay Company that the Company archives up to the year 1900, hitherto open only to 1870, shall be made available for study by accredited students. The article which follows, by the Company Archivist, describes some of the archival resources.

William Smith, Company Secretary who began the 19th century catalogue of records.

THREE HUNDRED YEARS OF RECORDS

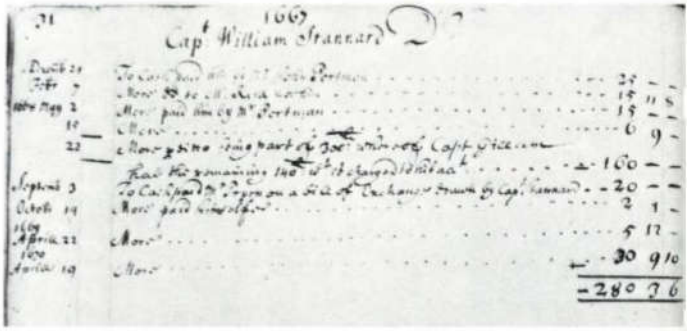
By Joan Craig

THE CIRCUMSTANCES of the Company's earliest days could not have been conducive to the regular and safe keeping of records. The Company had no settled home and held its committee meetings at members' homes, or where they had connections: the Tower of London, where Sir John Robinson was Lieutenant, the Excise Office in Broad Street, where Alderman John Foorth had rooms, Prince Rupert's lodgings in Whitehall, and London taverns were all used for Committee rendezvous. The early surviving minutes indicate that records were variously in the care of Company officials, Committee members, and left in premises rented by the Company. The Charter, left in the hands of Prince Rupert in 1671, was at later dates mortgaged in return for cash needed to keep the Company's trade going. Accommodation for 'papers bookes & accountes' was in 1671 provided at John Foorth's quarters in the Excise Office, Broad Street, later (1679-80) in the 'great Trunke' in the Committee Room rented by the Company at the Golden Anchor, Cornhill, and in the home of Committee member John Letten in Turnwheel Lane, a regular meeting-place for the Committee from October 1680 to March 1682. With the lease of Scriveners' Hall in 1682 the 'Screetore, trunck and all other things belonging to the Compa' were transferred there from Mr Letten's and the Hall, known as Hudson's Bay House by the end of that year, afforded premises for the Adventurers for the next fourteen years.

In July 1683 the Secretary reported the purchase of an 'Iron Chest' with great keys and padlock keys, but of a long list of items noted as forming its original contents, only the Charter and possibly the seals mentioned are still in the Company's hands. That Adventurers still personally had care of some records is evidenced by the fact that Governor Nixon's report of 1682 from the Bay has survived not in the Company's records but in those of the Royal Society in the papers of Robert Boyle (who held stock but took no active part in Company affairs), and by the appeals made by the Committee for the return of Company books and papers retained by Sir James Hayes after he had severed active connection with the Company about the end of 1685.

In 1695 the Company, in a Chancery action, found itself forced to admit the inadequacies of its record-keeping in its early days by confessing to a lack of knowledge regarding its transactions or trade of the period 'all their bookes and papers which they kept att that time and for about the four first yeares of their Trade haveing been lost and carryed away by one of their Servants'. When the lease of Scriveners' Hall terminated in 1696, the Secretary and warehouse keeper were cautioned by the Committee 'to take care that nothing be imbeziled or lost' in the course of the move to new premises on the north side of Fenchurch Street.

These disturbances considered, the Company is undoubtedly fortunate still to retain its run of minute books, either 'fair' or 'foule' copy, from 1679 (with the exception of the years 1788 to '92), an unbroken series of 'Copy-Books of Letters Outward' to its employees in Rupert's Land, beginning in the same year, Invoice Books of Shipments to Hudson Bay from 1684 to the 1780s, Books of Assignments of Stock from 1673 to 1863 (that for 1778-97 is missing) and the most useful series of Grand Ledgers and Journals. The earliest surviving

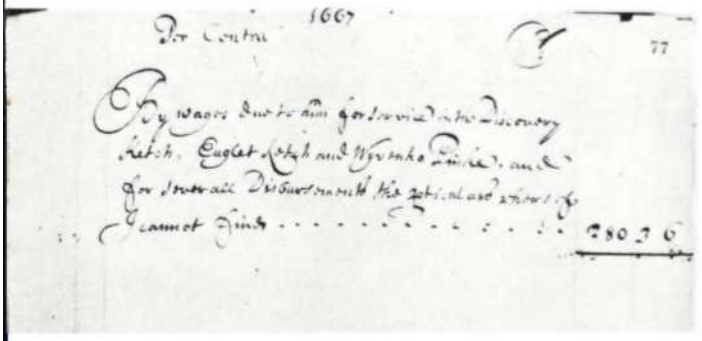


In the Company's first surviving Grand Ledger is this account for Captain William Stannard.

Grand Ledger was begun in November 1671 in conformity with a Committee resolution that '. . . Mr Rastel doe forthwith give an account to this Comittee not onely of the whole charge of Setteing out the Shippes & Stocke of the Adventurers this Last voyage to Hudson's bay, but alsoe of the charge of all former voyages beginneing from the first joynte Stocke of the Adventurers, & that there bee a true State of the Whole buisnies & every particular man's interest duely Sett forth & entred in fayre Vellum bookes against tuesday next the 14th day of this instante november, if it can bee Soe Soone done'. Some of the entries in this Ledger relate to the pre-Charter days and indeed are our primary Company source for information on the *Nonsuch* venture of 1668-9, but how sorely Thomas Rastell was tried when endeavouring to account for the early days is shown by such despairing entries as 'By wages due to him [Captain William Stannard] . . . and for severall Disbursements the pticulars whereof I cannot find'.

The earliest surviving Grand Journal dates from 1676 and, until 1713 when the entries are made more briefly, the Grand Journals provide valuable information often given in greater detail than in any other surviving series. At this period, for which we have no surviving General Correspondence Books, Cash Books, Officers' and Servants' Ledgers, Fur Sale Books, etc., we turn to the Grand Journals for names of suppliers of goods and provisions for the trade and for the Company's ships, for payments received for the sale of furs and for details regarding the wages of employees and ships' crews.

Few records from the Company's posts have survived in our archives for the troubled years prior to the Treaty of Utrecht; the earliest extant is a York Factory general account book by John Lawson covering trading season 1688-9. Additional York Factory account books cover the period up to 1697 and there are Albany accounts from 1692, miscellaneous papers from 1694, letters from 1703 and journals from 1705. To supplement the information provided by these one has to rely, in the Company's records, on London documents such as the minutes, letter books, and accounts.



Thomas Rastell who began the ledger in 1671 had trouble accounting for earlier disbursements.

Lease of the premises on the north side of Fenchurch Street came to an end in 1794 and a transfer was made to premises at the southwest end of the same street, to Nos. 3 and 4 which, in their turn, became known as Hudson's Bay House. Alexander Lean, Company Secretary, writing to the Company's Stromness agent, David Geddes, on 7 October 1794 confessed that from the 'confused state' things were in on account of the move, he was unable to lay his hands on Geddes' recent letters to him. (It seems likely from the very few inward letters which have survived in the records from non-Company employees for the eighteenth century that these letters were purposely destroyed.) This move probably occasioned the making of the Company's first catalogue of its records. In 1796 John Brome, 'Sub-Accountant' received 'Twenty Guineas in consideration of the Labour & Trouble in classing & arranging the Companys Books from the Commencement of the Company & making an Inventory of & Index to the same'.

The result of Brome's labours is very likely the slim 'INVENTORY OF BOOKS, &c' which we still have in the archives. Brome's catalogue was continued to include records up to about 1811. A few years later a new catalogue was begun by William Smith, an employee from 1813 and Company Secretary from 1818. This catalogue, which contained revised copy of entries from the earlier catalogue, was apparently in use for most of the nineteenth century though it was not kept up to date for all series of records. Entries recording accession of post journals continue to 1863, of Northern, Western and Southern Department accounts to 1887, and of ships' logs to 1876. Individual items in the larger series of records were numbered in the catalogue, and a corresponding number was put on the cover of the record itself. Annotations in the catalogue show that some of the records were loaned to members of the Committee and to other interested persons such as Dr (later Sir) John Richardson and most significantly 'Mr Arrowsmith', one of the family of cartographers. Maps such as that by Joseph Howse (leader of the only Company expedition to cross the Rockies prior to the 1821 coalition) of the Rocky Mountains showing connection of the Athabasca, Saskatchewan and Missouri Rivers, 1812, and those marking the routes of Snake Country expeditions led by Donald McKenzie, 1819-20, Finan McDonald, 1823, Alexander Ross, 1824, and P. S. Ogden, 1826-7, are but a few examples of those which in the catalogue are marked with a cross denoting that they were 'in a list sent to Mr Arrowsmith' and which have never been returned to the Company.

From as early as 1683 the London Committee instructed their factors in the Bay to keep 'Journalls of what hath been done in the respective factories & of all occurrances . . . that we may know how they & those under them have emploied their time . . .'. In addition to the records sent annually to London duplicate copies of journals, accounts, letters, etc., were to be preserved at the posts for the information of the man in charge and his successors. Some of these 'duplicates' came into the Company's archives from the posts in the 1920s. Comparison between versions of the same journal show variations with the writer sometimes dressing up the colloquial expressions of the post copy, sometimes giving explanatory details for the Board and sometimes choosing to omit information.

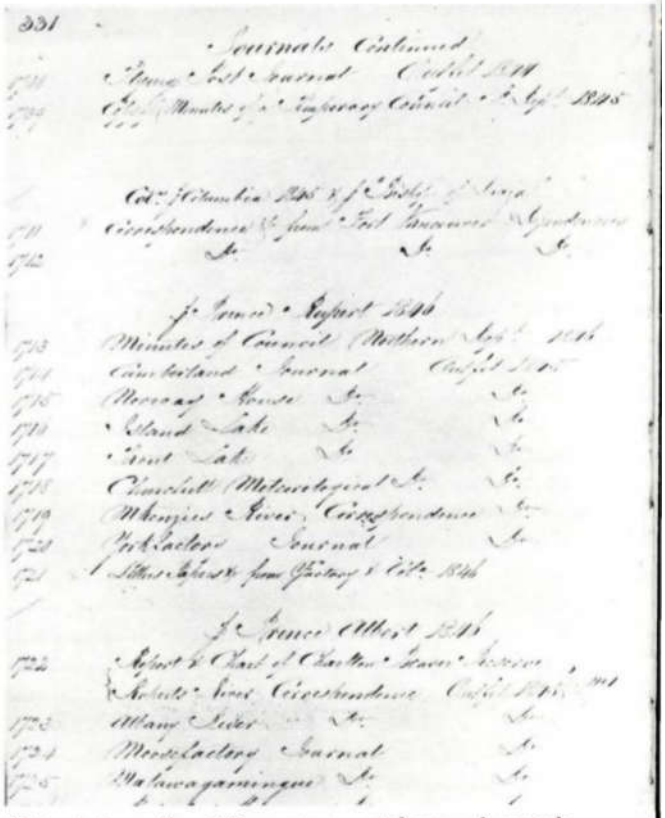
With the reorganization of the Company's trade in 1814 lengthy instructions were given by the Board to the factors regarding the keeping of journals. They called, in addition, for the transmission to London of District Reports to remedy the situation in which they found themselves with 'information of which we ought to be possess'd, with respect to the present state of our establishments . . . in many points imperfect, and that to which we have access . . . too much scattered to be easily collected together'. The reports were to include sketch plans of Districts, description of navigation, nature of the

country, the climate, details of post buildings, ground under cultivation, particulars regarding Company employees, Indians and the 'Canadians' and of the trade. The Committee members also called for annual reports to keep them up to date. In September 1822 the chief factors of the Southern Department admitted to the Board that they had not instructed post masters to maintain the keeping of journals and reports and 'none has in consequence been received'. Presumably many of the post masters, knowing that the Company and its opponents had made common cause, deemed it unnecessary to keep the usual documents. Compared with Outfit 1820-1 when thirty-five post journals had been sent to London, only nine were sent for Outfit 1821-2 and all from the Northern Department. District reports, sometimes simply in the form of letters, survive in the records in various series. In the 1860s the Governor and Committee noted that 'of late years' the practice of sending reports to them had fallen off and instructed that it should be revived, one of the objects being 'that every man should know that his observations come under the consideration of the Board'. As a result of particular instructions from the Commissioners we have a series of district reports dated 1885 and a collection of sketch-plans of posts from 1895-6. For this later period, however, our most detailed reports are those of the inspecting chief factors who toured the Company's Districts from 1886 to '94 to provide particulars regarding posts in accordance with a set scheme for inspections which called for details of buildings, stock, furs, accounts, expenses, and personnel.

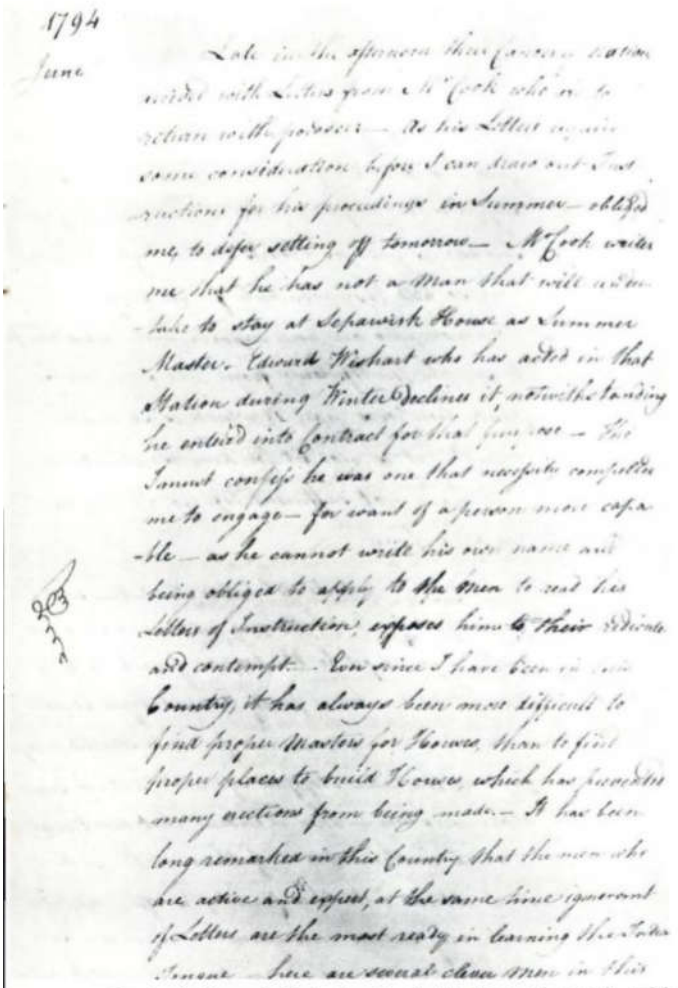
The odds against which the Company's men laboured to keep their post accounts and journals may well be imagined. James Knight at York Factory in 1716 retorted to the Governor and Committee in London 'You have writt for a great many things to be done but have not sent one Quire of Paper nor no Ink nor wee are not able to Make above a pint of Ink and no paper with but 2 books sent when wee use 4 Every Year, a Journall Book and Accompt book to go home and likewise the Same to Stay here in case of Miscarriage'. Richard Staunton apologized in 1739 from Moose Fort for the dirtiness of his journal explaining that he had 'many times write with hands as black as a Chimney Sweper, and Cloths as Greesey as a Butcher.' George Sutherland wintering 1779-80 in the vicinity of Sturgeon Lake (present-day Ontario) was in dire straits for food and obliged at times to eat his shoes, mittens and snowshoe strings. He prefaced some remarks regarding the 'Pedlars' in his journal by saying 'I have got a great dele to say about them if I had but time and I am determined to take time today as I had a good breakfast, because I cannot think of Writing when I am hungary'. George Simpson in the comparative comfort of Fort Wedderburn over the winter of 1820-1 complained of ink freezing in his pen when within four feet of a large fire.

There are, of course, Company posts known to have been in operation, and some as important as the Snake Country establishments of Fort Hall and Fort Boisé, from which no records have survived in the Company's archives. Sometimes the omission is accounted for by the fact that records were lost in fires, as those at Carlton House during the North West Rebellion; and sometimes in travelling, as Ogden's Snake Country journal for 1829-30 and William Tomison's journal of his inland journey from Severn over the winter of 1767-8 when he was the first Company man to see the site of the present city of Winnipeg. Sometimes the men in charge of small posts, though good traders, could not write; sometimes the records have been lost to the Company and survived in other holdings.

A few of the Company's employees in Rupert's Land found their surroundings worthy of record over and above the requirements laid down by their employers, whose dictates were governed by the requirements of trade. Students of North American history, geography, biography, anthropology, and natural history should be especially indebted to James Isham whose 'Observations' were written 'in cold Days and Long winter Nights' to prevent 'that too common Malady the Vapours', to Andrew Graham, and to Peter Fidler for their volumes of 'Observations' presented or bequeathed to the Company.



Extract from the 19th century catalogue of records listing records under the name of vessel in which they were brought from the factories, here 'Prince Albert' and 'Prince Rupert'.



Part of Joseph Colen's York Factory Journal, with hand directing attention to a passage added in London.

From 1821 there are useful departmental records such as Minutes of Council (noting the appointments of officers, clerks, and post masters to their respective stations and the general arrangements for the administration of the coming year's trade), and 'Abstracts of Servants' Accounts' listing employees under contract, together with particulars of their district of employment, wages, 'parish' of origin and capacity in which employed.

With inter-Company correspondence there is always the likelihood of duplication to assist the researcher. When an original letter is wanting, there is the possibility that the letter-book copy (the fore-runner of today's carbon copy) will have survived in another series. For example Governor Simpson's correspondence to the Board in London should survive firstly in the form of originals kept in folders of loose letters, and secondly in the copy made by his secretary in his copy-book of outward letters. Simpson's records in the Company's archives have been described in *The Beaver*, Summer 1960, by Alice M. Johnson. His successors' records do not conform to his high standards and make, generally speaking, the 1860s disappointing purlieus for the researcher. With the promotion of James A. Grahame from the charge of the Company's affairs on the Pacific North West Coast to the position of the Company's Chief Commissioner in 1874, the papers of the Company's senior officer in North America resume some of the 'system and regularity' characteristic of Sir George Simpson's records. From both Grahame and his successor, Joseph Wrigley, appointed in 1884 from outside the Company's employ, we have a fair body of 'country correspondence' (letters received from the Company's district officers). This series, valuable for on-the-spot information at a time of increasing settlement in the northwest, is regrettably almost completely missing for the tenure of Commissioner C. C. Chipman, appointed in 1891. On account of this missing material the researcher is increasingly dependent on Chipman's letters to the Board in London, a block of correspondence whose organization reflects the change-over from the traditional chronological filing system to a method of subject-filing adopted in the London office in 1911.

A separate group of records from subsidiary companies, such as the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company, exists in the archives. The North West Company papers likewise form a distinct (though disappointingly small) collection in H B C holdings. Again there are separate series of records for the Red River Settlement papers (some census returns, land records, account books, copies of registers of baptisms, marriages and burials, Council of Assiniboia minutes, etc.) and for papers relating to various Arctic Expeditions. Inevitably, however, there is a deal of additional information on these subjects to be found within the regular series of Company records.

Research into the Company's shipping history must involve one in a study of the London minutes, correspondence and accounts. At various periods the Company employed a ships' husband but no separate body of records has survived to document his concern. As may be expected, ships' logs comprise the largest series of shipping records in the archives; the regular series of logs of transatlantic voyages dates back to 1751. Logs of the Bay sloops are still kept, as originally, together with the records of the post on which they were dependent. Books of Seamen's Wages and Portledge Books (giving data on ships' crews) have survived, as have some ships' miscellaneous papers and books.

One aspect of the London Secretary's duties for which there is comparatively little documentary evidence is his work looking after the financial investments of the Company's employees in the Bay who, because of distance, were in no position to do this themselves. Glimpses of the amount of work this must have entailed are afforded by the papers occasionally surviving regarding the settlement of deceased employees' estates. Sir George Simpson, E. M. Hopkins, and Donald A. Smith, when resident in Canada, also undertook some investment work of this nature, as can be seen from some

of the Montreal correspondence books. Generally speaking, the records, created as they have been in the course of ordinary business, provide little information relating to employees' families.

It was Mr Leveson Gower in the 1930s who began the classification of the Company's records according to a system recommended by Professor Coupland of Oxford University and Mr (later Sir) Hilary Jenkinson, of the Public Record Office, London. From the early 1930s access to the Company's archives up to 1870 was afforded to scholars of North American history and allied subjects; the bibliography elsewhere in this issue touches on some of the resulting published material.

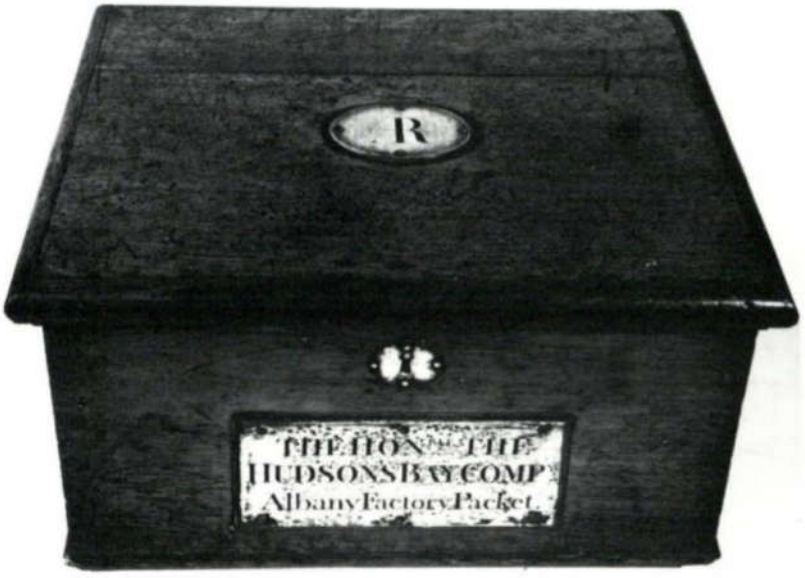
The mid-1930s also saw steps being taken for the publication of Company archival material by the Company itself. These preparations resulted in April 1938 in the incorporation of the Hudson's Bay Record Society. Agreement was reached with the Champlain Society of Toronto by which the Hudson's Bay Record Society publications were initially issued under the Champlain Society's aegis. The first volume of this series entitled *Journal of Occurrences in the Athabasca Department by George Simpson, 1820 and 1821, and Report* appeared in 1938 under the general editorship of E. E. Rich, Fellow of St Catharine's College, Cambridge.

With the worsening of the European international situation in the late 1930s, it was thought that some safeguard should be made against the loss of the Company's records. A microfilming program was considered but rejected, and the speedier alternative of removing the records from London to a safer place in the country was adopted. From summer 1939 to 1945 the bulk of the records was stored at Hexton Manor, Hertfordshire, the home of the Governor of the Company, the late Sir Patrick Ashley Cooper. Under these difficult conditions little archive work could be achieved but the Hudson's Bay Record Society continued to publish its volume yearly with Miss Alice M. Johnson in the London office undertaking the transcribing of documents, the supplying of footnotes and appendix material, and the preparation of the volume for press while in correspondence with the General Editor, then enlisted in the Services.

The records returned from war-time storage to Bishopsgate, London, in July 1945 and work was resumed on classification. However, with the commencement of a microfilming program of the Company's records in 1950, classification work proper again took a back seat, and pride of place was given to the preparation of records for microfilming. By this program, undertaken in co-operation with the Public Archives of Canada, the Company's records up to 1870, the date of the Deed of Surrender of Rupert's Land to the Crown, were filmed making in all a total of 1,858 reels of 35mm film. Company maps were not filmed on account of the size and physical condition of some which made them unsuitable subjects. The negative microfilms were forwarded to Ottawa in instalments where positive films were made for the Public Archives of Canada. Access to these films in the Public Archives is governed by the Hudson's Bay Company. Nearly 1,200 reels of Company records were inspected by 37 readers in the Public Archives in 1969.

The microfilming program was completed in 1966 and a year later sorting, classification, and detailed cataloguing of the post-1870 records was resumed and continues to date. The Company's Archives Deparment, now at Beaver House in London, holds some 3,200 linear feet of records dating from 1670 to the present day. The earliest document held is the Royal Charter of 2 May 1670. In 1969, 27 researchers worked on manuscript material (prior to 1870) totalling together 298 visits.

Now, for the first time, classified records up to the year 1900 are available for inspection by accredited readers.◆



Packet box of the type put into use when the Governor and Committee sent these instructions to the Bay in May 1801: 'We now consign to you our Ship "Prince of Wales" Captn Jno. Turner, who will deliver to you a Box (of which he has the Key) containing Invoice Bill of Lading of Provisions & Merchandize shipped to your Address with Sundry Letters & Papers according to a list inclosed. The Key of this Box having a Brass Label affix'd to it you will keep, & return the Box with the Factory Packet therein, this will be the Manner in which the Factory Packets shall be conveyed by our Ships to & from the Bay in future.'

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HE "ENDURED GREAT HARDSHIPS IN TRAVELING TO MAKE PEACE AMONGST THE NORTHERN INDIANS."

This was William Stuart, sent in 1715 from York Factory on a peace mission to the Athabascan tribes north of Churchill. After travelling for almost a year across hundreds of miles of "Barren Desarts," Stuart did succeed in reconciling the differences between the Crees and the Chipewyans.

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When craftsmanship was still an art
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Available throughout Canada at The Bay, Morgan's, and other leading stores, or write to Blanket Division, Hudson's Bay House, Winnipeg 1.

Hudson's Bay Company
INCORPORATED 2ND MAY 1670

Pictures aboard the Nonsuch—replica of the Bay's first trading vessel.